

## 26 Somali factions to form council

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) — Somali clan factions have set up a national salvation council aimed at paving the way for a transitional government in a bid to end five years of bloodshed and violence, officials said here Friday. However, Somali warlord Hussein Mohammad Aideed's United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA) faction was not among the 26 groups which took part in more than four weeks of tough negotiations in the Ethiopian capital. The clan chiefs appointed a 41-member council and an 11-strong national executive committee in the presence of observers from the Organisation of African Unity and the Inter-Government Authority on Development.

# Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation  
جورديان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

## 8 letter-bombs sent from Egypt to U.S.

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A letter-bomb sent from Egypt was found Friday at a high-security prison in the Midwest, bringing to eight the number of devices discovered in the United States in 24 hours. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) spokesmen said. The FBI announced that a second bomb was discovered Friday at the Leavenworth prison. Spokesman Max Geiman later retracted the assertion, saying the FBI erred and the letter in question was "irrelevant." Mr. Geiman added that the letter did not originate in Alexandria, Egypt, as have the eight discovered since Thursday in Washington, D.C. and at the Leavenworth facility in Kansas (see page 12). The postal inspection service was, however, still examining each piece of mail delivered to the prison, where two letter-bombs were found Thursday followed by a third Friday, Mr. Geiman stated.

Volume 22 Number 6419

AMMAN SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1997, SHAABAN 24, 1417

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

## Palestinians hold out for Israeli pullout schedule

### Hebron gunman to take tests

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli soldier who fired on Palestinian shoppers in Hebron earlier in the week was ordered Friday to undergo psychiatric tests, and his lawyer reportedly urged him to plead innocent on grounds of insanity.

Noam Friedman, 22, has said he is mentally stable and that he opened fire in downtown Hebron on Wednesday in hopes of scuttling an Israeli troop withdrawal from most of the West Bank city. Five Palestinians were wounded in the shooting.

The Yediot Ahronot daily said Friedman had also planned other attacks on Arabs. It said he had intended to steal an armored personnel carrier, drive it to an Arab village near his army base and open fire. Friedman also spoke of attacking the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem.

Friedman had a history of psychiatric problems. He was expelled from a Jewish seminary, and was drafted late into the army.

A second soldier, Yuval Jibli, 21, has been detained in the Hebron shooting on suspicion he knew of Friedman's plans. Yediot said a third soldier who, like Jibli, served with Friedman at a logistics base near Jerusalem, was also detained and questioned.

On Friday, Friedman met for the first time with his attorney, Naphtali Werzberger. The attorney suggested that Friedman plead innocent on grounds of insanity when charged, army radio said. However, the gunman refused, insisting he was sane.

A judge on Friday ordered Friedman to undergo psychiatric tests at a hospital, the report said.

Friedman's mother, Riva, told the Maariv newspaper she had no explanation for her son's deeds. "It's not the boy I know...It's as though something possessed his body and it is inside that awful gaze," she told the Maariv newspaper.

She said that in recent months, her son became increasingly fervent in observing religious law. In a visit to the family's home in the West Bank settlement of Maale Adumim, he asked that the television set be removed from the house. She said he also refused to eat regular army food, saying it was not kosher enough.

Friedman became more withdrawn after a classmate was kidnapped by Palestinian militants in 1994 and killed during a rescue attempt.

Rabbi Yehoshua Katz, who met with Friedman several times before the shooting, said the gunman told him: "I am the Messiah." Other rabbis said Friedman spoke of divine revelations.

The army has ordered an investigation into why Friedman was enlisted and given a rifle after his community psychiatrist recommended he not be drafted.

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Palestinian negotiators said they will not sign an agreement on Hebron until Israel commits to a deadline for withdrawing its troops from most of the West Bank.

Resisting U.S. pressure, the Palestinians said they would block the long-overdue deal on Hebron until Israel commits to further troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

"Before there can be a summit, there must be agreement," Palestinian negotiator Jamil Tarifi said. "The most important thing for us are the dates for the second and third stages of redeployment."

Under the past Israeli-Palestinian accords, Israeli troops were to have pulled out of Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli control, by March 1996. The accords also call for three additional troops pullbacks from rural areas of the West Bank.

The so-called "further redeployment" was to have occurred in intervals of six months between September 1996 and September 1997. The understanding between Israel's previous government and the Palestinians was that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) would control most of the West Bank by September 1997.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not begin the rural withdrawal as scheduled in September. He has said giving up more

land now could weaken Israel's position in talks on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In the Hebron talks, the PNA insisted that Israel commit to a withdrawal timetable to be completed by September 1997, as originally planned.

The Palestinians said the Israeli prime minister told them withdrawal could begin within six weeks of the signing of a Hebron agreement, but refused to give a deadline for completing the three-stage redeployment.

Mr. Netanyahu's top aide, David Bar-Ilan, denied that Mr. Netanyahu has committed to a starting date for withdrawal, saying the prime minister would only discuss it with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat in a summit.

Mr. Bar-Ilan said there was no need for a completion date, noting that the original accord specified six-month intervals.

However, he said "there may be a reluctance on our part to continue with the process" if the Palestinians violate their sides of the agreements.

In Gaza City, U.S. President Bill Clinton's Mideast envoy, Dennis Ross, talked with Mr. Arafat to try to resolve the dispute and arrange a summit with Mr. Netanyahu. He apparently fell short.

"We have not solved all the remaining issues that still have to be resolved before having an agreement," Mr. Ross said after

the three-hour session. "We are continuing to work through the problems."

The urgency of resolving Hebron's future was underlined by Wednesday's shooting spree by an off-duty Israeli soldier in Hebron, Noam Friedman, 22, fired his automatic weapon at a crowded Palestinian market, wounding five Arab shoppers. He later said he wanted to scuttle the Hebron troop redeployment (see separate story).

Two issues remained unsettled in the Hebron talks.

Mr. Arafat wants assurances that Jewish settlers will not be allowed to build high-rise buildings, thus increasing the population in their six enclaves in downtown Hebron. About 450 Jews live in Hebron, a city of 120,000 Palestinians.

Mr. Arafat also wants to station a Palestinian policeman at the Ibrahim Mosque, a shrine in downtown Hebron that is sacred to Muslims and Jews. In 1994, a Jewish settler opened fire in the tomb, killing 30 Muslim worshippers.

The site is in an area of Hebron that would remain under Israeli control after the troop withdrawal.

Mr. Netanyahu also is facing opposition from right-wing elements in his own government to get stringent security guarantees for the Jewish settlers

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## Syria: Israel behind blast that killed 9 in Damascus

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria said Thursday Israeli agents planted a bomb on a bus in central Damascus, killing nine people and wounding 44, as part of attempts to destroy the Middle East peace process.

Israel denied being behind the New Year's eve attack and the United States warned Syria against making "wild and irresponsible" statements without evidence.

A Syrian spokesman, quoted by the official news agency SANA on Thursday, hinted that the incident was linked to an anti-Damascus campaign in Lebanon which included violent attacks against Syrian targets in December.

"This terrorist, cowardly and criminal action comes within the framework of threats which were launched recently by Israeli officials that aim at killing the peace process."

"Agents of the (Israeli) intelligence agency) Mossad utilised preparations for the New Year celebrations on Tuesday with people leaving to their towns and planted an explosive device inside the bus which exploded minutes after it left the bus station at noon," the official said on Thursday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Bazak told Reuters: "It's a gross lie. Israel strives for nothing but peace and acts solely in peaceful ways."

"We unequivocally condemn terrorist actions in

(Continued on page 7)

## Jordan denounces attack and expresses solidarity with Syria

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has expressed its condemnation of a bomb attack on a bus in Syria which resulted in the death and injury of more than 50 people and voiced total support for Syria in the face of criminal acts.

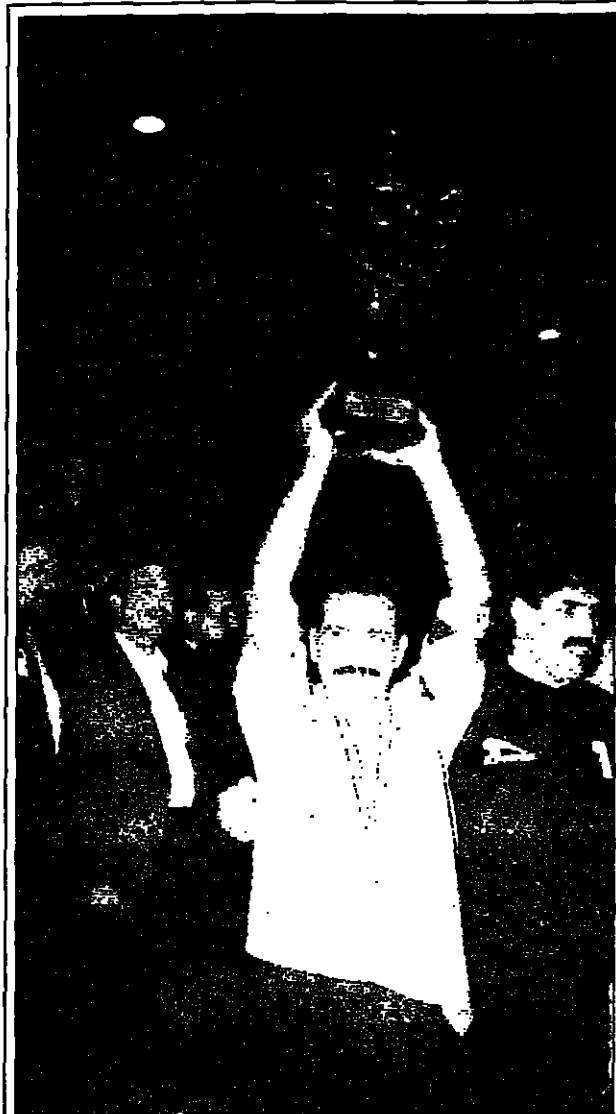
His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, called Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to voice Jordan's condemnation of the terrorist attack which occurred last Tuesday.

"Jordanians felt outrage and repulsion over this criminal act that has targeted innocent lives," the Crown Prince told President Assad, stressing that Jordan will remain opposed to all acts of terrorism anywhere and from any source.

The Crown Prince expressed Jordan's condolences to President Assad over the death of the innocent people in the blast.

President Assad thanked Prince Hassan, stressing that the terrorists who were behind this criminal act were targeting Syria's stance and its moves to attain a just and permanent peace.

He said the cycle of violence in this region should end and called for close cooperation in the face of violence.



WINNERS: Al Wihdat's captain Yousef Al Ammouri raises the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) Premier League trophy which his team won after beating Al Faisali 4-1 on penalty shootout. The two teams drew 1-1 before the match, held at Amman International Stadium in the presence of some 28,000 fans, was extended into two extra halves (see story on page 11)

## Experts working on Iraq-Jordan oil deal

By P.V. Vivekanand  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Two Jordanian ministers have returned home after talks in Baghdad with senior Iraqi officials and technical experts are working on details of renewing an oil agreement between the two countries.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Friday. The agreement, under which Iraq is expected to increase by seven per cent its oil supplies to Jordan, will be signed when Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb visits Baghdad, probably this week. Dr. Muasher told the Jordan Times.

Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Hashem Dabbas and Minister of Finance Marwan Awad returned home late Thursday after four days of talks in Baghdad.

It was expected that the oil accord would be signed during their stay in Baghdad.

Asked whether there was any problem in renewing the agreement, Dr. Muasher said, "not as far as I know."

Dr. Muasher said "cer-

tain technical details" remained to be sorted out in the agreement.

"Technical experts from the two sides are working on the details," he said.

Other officials said Mr. Abul Ragheb, accompanied by Minister of Transport Nasser Lawzi, is scheduled to visit Baghdad for a meeting of the Joint Jordanian-Iraqi Economic Commission on Jan. 6.

During that visit, Jordan and Iraq are also expected to renew their annual trade protocol, which is tied with the oil agreement.

Iraqi newspapers said Thursday that Mr. Abul Ragheb and Mr. Lawzi "will continue talks begun by the first ministerial delegation on trade relations and on how much crude oil Jordan will import."

Dr. Dabbas said in Baghdad last week that Iraq had agreed to increase by seven per cent its supply of oil to Jordan. That will mean 4.5 million tonnes of crude oil and oil derivatives in 1997.

Iraq supplies all of Jordan's oil needs by trucking 50,000 barrels per day

(Continued on page 7)

## Crown Prince leaves on visit to Britain, Spain

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Lawzi, Lower House of Parliament Speaker Sa'd Havel Srou, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and other senior officials,

was sworn in as Regent.

Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath were seen off at the airport by His Royal Highness Prince Faisal, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, Prince Ali Ben Nayef, Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Lawzi, Lower House of Parliament Speaker Sa'd Havel Srou, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh and other senior officials.

## Jordan stresses need for more commitment to Middle East peace

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan on Friday underlined the importance of increased commitment to achieving just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East and said violence was detrimental to the Arab-Israeli peace process.

The Jordanian reaffirmation came during a meeting between His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and an Arab-Israeli delegation, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

The visit of the Arab-Israeli delegation, representing the Islamic Movement in Israel, is the third by an Israeli team to Jordan in two days and is part of what Information Minister Marwan Muasher on Friday described as Jordan's continued contacts with all "colours of the Israeli political spectrum."

On Thursday a seven-member team representing the opposition Labour Party and a nine-member delegation from the Israeli parliament's economic committee visited Jordan and held talks with the Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

"The talks are part of an ongoing dialogue between Jordan and the various groups on the Israeli political map on cooperation and the peace process," said Shalom Tourgeman, a spokesman for the Israeli embassy here.

In his talks with the Arab Israeli team on Friday, the Crown Prince specifically referred to Wednesday's attack by an Israeli soldier against Palestinians in Hebron and a bomb blast in Damascus reported by the Syrian government.

Petra quoted the Crown Prince as saying that he Middle East requires much

more commitment to a just, durable and comprehensive peace for all parties concerned.

Petra said the Crown Prince also told the delegation that the escalation of unrest and violence adversely affects the quest for peace in the region.

The Crown Prince reaffirmed Jordan's complete support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinians in their national soil.

On a bilateral front, the Crown Prince called for developing cultural links between Jordan and Arab Israelis and also expressed an interest to visit Akka, a prominent cultural site in what is now Israel, Petra said.

The Arab-Israeli delegation represents the Islamic Movement in Israel and is headed by Abdullah Nimer Darwish and it includes two members of the Israeli Knesset, Abdul Malik Knaaneh and Tawfiq Khatib.

Petra quoted Mr. Darwish as praising the Jordanian leadership and people for their support of the Palestinian cause. "This role is highly appreciated by the Palestinians," he was quoted as saying.

Dr. Muasher, the information minister, meanwhile described as "useful, positive and constructive" the talks the Israeli Labour Party delegation, led by former minister Yossi Beilin and including former Interior Minister Haim Ramon, held in Amman on Thursday.

"We see eye to eye on the need to advance the peace process," he told the Jordan Times.

"The message we want to send to all parties in Israel is that we are seeking to maintain the momentum of the peace process and we

(Continued on page 7)

## Peru crisis continues

LIMA (AFP) — Despite stalled talks between Peru's government and rebels holding dozens of hostages at the Japanese ambassador's residence, analysts said Friday neither side was set to turn to brute force to end the standoff.

"It would be very difficult for the government to use violence, mainly because of pressure from the Japanese," political analyst Fernando Rospigliosi told AFP. Japanese Ambassador Morihisa Aoki and Japanese diplomats and executives were among the 74

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ROYAL JORDANIAN

ROYAL JORDANIAN has the pleasure to announce a new checking - in procedure, for First and Super Business Class passengers as of January 1st 1997. Complete departure formalities will be done at Terminal 1 on behalf of First and Business Class passengers, while they are relaxing at the CIP Lounge.

مكتبة حنة العاص



# U.S. brands executions in Libya as show trials

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States charged Thursday that Libya had executed eight people accused of spying for Washington as a ploy to deflect attention from domestic problems.

These kind of show trials are meant to take the gaze of their own population off what's happening in the country and direct it to a convenient scapegoat, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

"The United States for dictatorial regimes is a scapegoat because we stand for something quite different, which is due process, fair play and democracy," he said.

The State Department said it was unable to deny or confirm whether the eight Libyans including six senior military officers were on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as alleged by Tripoli.

"We don't have all the facts," Mr. Burns said. But he insisted that Libya's assertions could not be taken at face value and described the spying allegations as "wild charges."

Libyan television reported earlier that the six military officers were shot and the two civilians hanged after the high military court on Wednesday upheld a lower court's death sentences for the defendants.

Libyan television showed an unidentified accused saying that the defendants had used "sophisticated equipment" provided by the CIA.

"The executions were carried out by firing squad on six military officers, and two civilians were

hanged," Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) said. "This was to implement the verdict against them by the military court."

Film carried on Libyan satellite stations Thursday showed about a dozen of the accused seated in a cage in prison uniforms, their heads shaved bare.

Libyan experts in Cairo said they believed the sentences were related not to espionage but to an October 1993 coup attempt that has never been publicly acknowledged by Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi.

The experts, who insisted on anonymity, said the coup took the form of a military uprising involving thousands of troops at Misratah, 180 kilometres east of the capital Tripoli, and Bani Walid, 130 kilometres south of Tripoli.

Colonial Qadhafi and his aides have characterised the uprising at the two military outposts as incidents of treachery and betrayal but never referred to them as a coup attempt.

The official statement Wednesday said: "You mobilised yourselves as spies against your country and allowed the enemies to get hold of military, economic and security capabilities by using sophisticated equipment supplied by the CIA."

In an apparent reference to the U.S. bombing of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986, the official was quoted by the television as saying:

"Have you forgotten or are you just playing down what those who recruited you as spies, have done to us? They have killed our

children, torn our bodies apart, raided our families as they were sleeping late in the night."

Libya says Col. Qadhafi's 15-month-old adopted daughter was among those killed in the 1986 bombing.

The six officers were identified as Mufthah Muhammad Gamum, Mustafa Abu Al Qasim Masud, Sad Salih Faraj, Khalil Salim Mohammed, Ramadan Al-Ihumi Mohammed Ali, and Mustafa Hubayl Al Fudhil, and the civilians as Isad Misbah Isad Al Amin and Sulayman Ghayt Mufthah.

After seizing power in a coup in 1969, Col. Qadhafi has maintained control by keeping a firm grip on the army, intelligence services and police, and by playing deftly in Libya's system of tribal politics.

President Bill Clinton on Thursday extended U.S. sanctions on Libya, saying the continues to promote international terrorism.

"The crisis between the United States and Libya ... has not been resolved," Mr. Clinton said in notifying Congress that he was continuing the sanctions first imposed by President Ronald Reagan in 1986.

"The government of Libya has continued its action and policies in support of terrorism, despite the calls by the United Nations Security Council," Mr. Clinton said.

Unless Mr. Clinton, who was vacationing in the Virgin Islands, had acted, the sanctions — which include the freezing of Libyan assets in the United States — would have expired on Jan. 7.



WEIZMAN IN BOMBAY: Israeli President Ezer Weizman (right) accompanied by his bodyguard (centre) meets members of the Jewish community in Bombay on Friday. The president, who is in the city on a two-day visit on the final leg of his India tour, specially took time off his schedule to address a gathering of more than 1,000 Jews living in Bombay (Reuters photo)

## Nurses' fate would depend on relatives — Saudi envoy

LONDON (R) — Relatives of an Australian nurse found stabbed in Saudi Arabia will hold the fate of two British colleagues in their hands if they are found guilty of murdering her, the Saudi ambassador to Britain said on Thursday.

Ghazi Algosaihi told Reuters the two nurses accused of stabbing 55-year-old Yvonne Gilford would avoid execution as long as the dead woman's relatives did not demand retribution.

"The relatives of a murder victim are the only ones who can insist on retribution. If they don't demand it, the court cannot impose the death sentence," he said.

Gilford's brother in Australia initially said he was unlikely to grant clemency to Deborah Kim Parry, 41, and Lucille McLaughlan, 31, if they were found guilty by Saudi courts. He has since said he may consider doing so.

The two nurses were arrested and jailed in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam on Dec. 20, nine days after the murder.

Salah Al Hejailan, the Saudi legal advisor for the women, has said he will make a public appeal to Gilford's family not to ask for the death sentence if the two are found guilty.

Under Saudi law, murderers may face public beheading by the sword. The victim's family may ask for a financial settlement called "diah" or blood money instead of the death penalty or waive compensation entirely.

Saudi Arabian police said earlier on Thursday both nurses had confessed to murdering Gilford and re-enacted the crime at the scene at King Fahd military medical complex in the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran.

Dr. Algosaihi, who has attacked British media for their coverage of the case, said the nurses' trial would be fair and dismissed suggestions that their confessions were obtained under duress.

"What I want to stress is that the only confession the court upholds is a confession that takes place freely in front of the court. Our police know this very well and it would be pointless to try to extract confessions by pressure," he said.

A confession was just one factor the court would consider and if it was not supported by the facts of the case, the court would ignore it, he said.

Dr. Algosaihi said a murder trial in Saudi Arabia normally went through three stages — a hearing in a high court with three judges, a court of appeal with five senior judges, and a supreme judicial council with five other senior judges.

"In our system, the judge considers himself responsible to God and he knows he will incur God's wrath if he condemns a person unless he is convinced beyond any doubt that he is guilty. The two women will be given every chance to defend themselves," he said.

## Israel linked with U.S. missile satellite

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel linked up Friday to the U.S. missilewarning satellite system.

The link will provide Israel with real-time warning if a missile is launched against it.

In the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel, killing two people and injuring hundreds, and causing extensive damage.

Patriot anti-aircraft missiles supplied by the United States proved ineffective against the Soviet-manufactured Scuds. Israel is now developing an anti-missile missile, the Arrow, with U.S. financial aid.

The satellite link was inaugurated Friday at the Tel Aviv military headquarters. It is operated by the air force.

The data will be sent in real time from the U.S. Early Warning Centre in Colorado, which will receive it from satellites.

Since the Gulf war, Iraq has been forbidden by U.N. sanctions to possess ground-to-ground ballistic missiles.

However, Iran, also hostile to Israel, possesses an improved Scud and is reportedly trying to obtain the longer-range North Korean Nodong-1 missile.

Syria also has the upgraded Scud and Israel says the Syrians are capable of manufacturing chemical and biological warheads.

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency told Congress last July that Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Libya are known to have such non-conventional warheads or have been suspected of developing them.

## Israeli soldier wanted to attack Al Aqsa

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Noam Friedman, the Israeli soldier who wounded six Palestinians in an attack on a riotous market, had initially planned to commit a massacre outside Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque, a newspaper reported Friday.

Yediot Aharonot said that Friedman, 22, had also considered stealing an armoured vehicle from his base and using it to stage a machine-gun attack on Palestinians living in a village near Jerusalem.

Friedman opened fire with his M-16 assault rifle on Palestinians in an open-air market in the West Bank city of Hebron on Wednesday, wounding six before he was overpowered by other Israeli troops.

Friedman, a resident of the Maale Adumim settlement

outside Jerusalem, reportedly told investigators said he had "no regrets" over the shooting and admitted he went to Hebron "to kill Arabs and torpedo the peace process."

He was ordered held for a further 10 days on Thursday by a court in Petah Tikva, near Tel Aviv.

The court also ordered another four days in custody for another soldier arrested in connection with the attack, Yuval Jibri, 21, a member of the same unit as Friedman.

Jibri is accused of having advance knowledge of Friedman's plans and not warning his superiors.

Another soldier from the same base who fired into the air on hearing about the Hebron attack has also been questioned by military police

but not detained, Israeli radio said. While leaving the court Thursday, Friedman shouted protests that his judge was a woman and that it was a civilian court, demanding that he be judged by rabbis.

He formerly attended a religious school and was known for extremist ideas but was not a member of any political group. He had also undergone psychiatric treatment.

Some 200 rounds of ammunition were found in the home of Friedman, who had served for the past seven months in a non-combat administrative unit.

In 1984, a clandestine network of anti-Arab Jewish extremists was broken up by the Israeli authorities before they could carry out a plan to bomb the Al Aqsa mosque.

## Denktash sees possibility of war

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash Friday mentioned the possibility of a war in Cyprus, saying the current tendency in the island was toward a conflict, not unification.

"If an accord is only imposed on Cyprus, without sufficient guarantees, the smallest incident between the Turkish-Cypriots and the Greek-Cypriots may explode the whole of Cyprus like a volcano," Mr. Denktash said in a radio interview, according to the Turkish-Cypriot tak news agency.

The current tendency in Cyprus is toward a war, not unification," Mr. Denktash said.

He also renewed his call for the integration of the self-styled Turkish-Cypriot state with Turkey in the event that the European Union opens talks with Greek-Cypriots for Cyprus membership to the EU.

In Ankara, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel said that Turkey was determined to "continue protecting the rights of the Turkish Cypriots arising from international agreement."

Tension has once again escalated in Cyprus in recent weeks after Turkish objections to a planned Greek Cypriot deal to buy long-range ground-to-air missiles

from Russia.

"It has been observed, that the Greeks have been buying offensive weapons," Mr. Demirel told a meeting with visiting Turkish-Cypriot prime minister Dervis Eroglu.

"It is self-explanatory that Turkey will not allow for developments that endanger the security of itself and the (breakaway) Turkish republic of northern Cyprus," Mr. Demirel said.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkish troops occupied the island's northern third following a right-wing coup in Nicosia aimed at unification with Greece.

## Top Turkish officials asked to testify in mafia scandal

ANKARA (AFP) — The Turkish parliament has asked top military, security and intelligence officials to testify in a scandal over mafia links with the state security apparatus, the Anatolia news agency reported Friday.

It said Chief of the General Staff General Ismail Hakkı Karadayi as well as the national intelligence under-secretary, the security director general and the gendarmie commander were invited to next Thursday's meeting of a special parliamentary commission set up to investigate the scandal.

The agency did not say why these officials, and in particular Gen. Karadayi, Turkey's top military commander, have

been asked to give information to the commission.

The scandal broke on Nov. 3 when wanted mafia boss Abdullah Catli, a former ultra-nationalist militant who had been hunted for 18 years, and a senior police chief were killed when their car crashed in western Turkey. Also in the same car was Sedat Bucak, a Kurdish parliamentary deputy from conservative Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller's party, who was seriously injured.

The incident, which for the first time exposed links among police, politicians and organised crime, has created uproar in Turkey and led to the resignation of Interior Minister Mehmet Agar.

JORDAN TELEVISION  
Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 The Adventures of Mickey and Donald

14:30 ..... Circus

15:00 Doc. — La France Ann. Mille Villages

15:30 ..... Fete des Bebes

16:00 ..... Sports — Gillette

16:30 ..... Chris Cross

17:00 ..... News Flash

17:02 ..... Futures

17:15 ..... Drama — Blue Heelers

18:00 ..... Serie — Jack

19:00 ..... Le Journal

19:15 ..... Magazine — Zina

19:30 ..... News Headlines

19:35 ..... Comedy — Something Wilder

20:00 ..... Magazine (I)

20:30 ..... Pysm

21:10 ..... Low and Clarke

22:00 ..... News in English

22:25 Classic movie — "Pride and Prejudice"

23:15 ..... Feature Film: "Lili"

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 ..... Fajr

06:32 ..... (Sunrise) Duha

11:40 ..... Dhuhur

14:26 ..... Asr

16:49 ..... Maghreb

18:11 ..... Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swefieh, Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661656

Terrasanta Church Tel.

# JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

6:22:06 Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 652826

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751

Armenian International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology:

It will be partly cloudy with temperatures above their average. At night it will be cold and winds southeasterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be hot and winds northerly moderate. Seas will be calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman ..... 05/19

Aqaba ..... 11/25

Deserts ..... 03/19

Jordan Valley ..... 10/24

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre ..... 637111

Civil Defence Department ..... 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue ..... 630341

Civil Defence Emergency ..... 199

Rescue Police 192, 621111

637777

Fire Brigade ..... 617101

Blood Bank ..... 775121

Highway Police ..... 843402

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 10, Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 32 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Makhles Mazahrah ..... 830425

Dr. Wissam Hazyin ..... 748563

Dr. Munther Al Qraini ..... 779959

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyib ..... 620115

Firas pharmacy ..... 661912

Ferdows pharmacy ..... 778336

Al Asema pharmacy ..... 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy ..... 632672

Al Salam pharmacy ..... 636730

Yacoub pharmacy ..... 644945

Shmeisani pharmacy ..... 637660

Najib pharmacy ..... 847632

IRBID:

Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh ..... 250800

Al Quds pharmacy ..... (—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Ziyad Ighaltim ..... 992991

Khalifeh pharmacy ..... 985417

TRAFFIC POLICE ..... 896390

Public Security Department ..... 630321

Price Complaints ..... 605800

Water and Sewerage Complaints ..... 897467

Amman Municipality Complaints ..... 787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) ..... 121

Overseas Calls ..... 010230

Central Amman Telephone Repairs ..... 623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs ..... 661101

Jordan Television ..... 773111

Radio Jordan ..... 774111

Water Authority ..... 680100

Jordan Electricity Authority ..... 815615

Electric Power Company ..... 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53300

HOSPITALS

Amman:

Busseini Medical Centre ..... 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn ..... 644281/6

Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. ..... 643441/2

Jabal Amman Maternity ..... 642362

Malhas, J. Amman ..... 636140

Palestine, Shmeisani ..... 607071

Shmeisani Hospital ..... 669131

University Hospital ..... 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital, 667227/4

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/7

Al-Ahli, Abdali ..... 664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen ..... 777101/3

Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh ..... 891611/15

Army, Marika ..... 891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602340/50

Amal Hospital ..... 674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery ..... 865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital ..... 09983323

Zarqa National Hospital ..... 09900560

Ibn Sina Hospital ..... 09986732

Al Hikam Modern Hospital ..... 09990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital ..... 02275555

Greek Catholic Hospital ..... 02272775

Ibn Al Nafes Hospital ..... 02237100

AQABA:

Princess Baysa Hospital ..... 03314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)63200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights is obtained on telephone (08) 52700 or (08) 523250.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:15 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

06:15 ..... Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)

08:55 ..... Damascus (RJ)

09:30 ..... Aqaba (add) (RJ)

09:45 ..... New Delhi (RJ)

09:55 ..... Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

10:05 ..... Beirut (RJ)

10:30 ..... Colombo (RJ)

14:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)

17:40 ..... London, Berlin (RJ)

19:35 ..... Vienna (RJ)

19:55 ..... Vienna (add) (RJ)

19:55 ..... Rome (add) (RJ)

23:50 ..... Larnaca (RJ)

02:30 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

05:35 ..... Bangkok (RJ)

07:35 ..... Osaka, Bangkok, Dubai (add) (RJ)

08:50 ..... Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

12:40 ..... Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GF)

15:05 ..... Vienna (OS)

18:15 ..... Dubai, Damascus (EK)

21:00 ..... Paris, Damascus (AF)

22:20 ..... Larnaca (CY)

22:25 ..... Beirut (ME)

22:35 ..... Cairo (MS)

23:40 ..... Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)

23:50 ..... London (RJ)

01:00 ..... London, Damascus (BA)

03:45 ..... Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:20 ..... Aqaba (RW)

18:55 ..... Sharm Al Sheikh (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

02:05 ..... Salalah (RJ)

05:00 ..... Jakarta (RJ)

06:20 ..... Beirut (RJ)

11:00 ..... Vienna (add) (RJ)

11:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)

11:50 ..... Rome (add) (RJ)

11:50 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)

11:50 ..... Paris, Brussels (RJ)

11:50 ..... Amsterdam, New York (RJ)

12:00 ..... Rome (RJ)

12:00 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)

12:15 ..... London (RJ)

12:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)

20:00 ..... Bombay (RJ)

20:15 ..... Bahrain, Doha (RJ)

20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)

21:00 ..... Larnaca (RJ)

21:30 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)

21:30 ..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)

00:15 Riyadh, Dhahran (add) (RJ)

05:45 ..... Marka, Aqaba (RJ)

Other Flights

00:15 ..... Damascus, Amsterdam (KL)

03:00 ..... Beirut, Athens (OA)

07:00 ..... Beirut (ME)

13:30 ..... Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (GF)

15:50 ..... Vienna (OS)

19:15 ..... Dubai (EK)

23:10 ..... Larnaca (CY)

23:30 ..... Cairo (MS)

23:55 ..... Abu Dhabi, Bahrain (AF)

00:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)

04:35 ..... Rome (AZ)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every Monday

Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday

Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday

Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upperflower price in fils per kg.

Apple ..... 700/500

Banana ..... 550/550

Banana (imported) ..... 850/600

Cabbage ..... 60/40

Carrot ..... 270/150

Cauliflower ..... 130/100

Cucumber (large) ..... 130/90

Eggplant ..... 150/80

Garlic ..... 850/600

Grape fruit ..... 150/100

Lemon ..... 380/250

Marrow (large) ..... 70/40

Marrow (small) ..... 130/70

Onion (green) ..... 140/60

Onion (dry) ..... 170/100

Orange ..... 560/400

Pepper (hot) ..... 280/150

Pepper (sweet) ..... 280/150

Potato ..... 260/120

Spinach ..... 110/100

String Bean ..... 380/280

Tomato ..... 170/120

06:30 ..... London (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

20:30 ..... Aqaba (RW)

## Home

## Princess meet to discuss ch

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Princess Basma met with a delegation representing the University of Oxford Brookes in the U.K. and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States, a Queen Alia International Airport statement said Friday.

The delegation is in Jordan to take part in a 12-day workshop in Amman on Tourism Development of Architectural Architecture of South Jordan.

During the meeting on Thursday, Princess Basma reviewed the work of QAF in improving the socio-economic status of underprivileged communities, particularly in rural areas, the statement said.

The Princess said the Jordan's strategy is to maintain a continuous presence in local communities and encourage grassroots participation in its projects.

She said QAF's programmes also involve training and skills development for citizens benefiting from these exercises will become increasingly productive and thus contribute to the effectiveness of local social development.

Princess Basma also touched on the achievements and activities of Jordanian women in diverse fields. She cited the work of the Jordanian National

## Minister c policy in

AQABA (J.T.) — Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Louson denounced Israeli policy in occupied Palestine as destabilising the entire region.

He also deplored what he termed as serious economic deterioration in the West Bank and Gaza Strip due to the continued Israeli blockade in the occupied territories.

Dr. Ensour's statements were delivered on his behalf by Head of the Department of Student Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education Maysoun Khatib at the opening of a three-day international symposium on peaceful existence in the Middle East, which convened in Aqaba Thursday evening.

The Jordan News Agency, Para, Friday quoted the minister as emphasising the importance of peaceful co-existence in the Middle East through the establishment of a just peace.

"Peace is not capitulation on the part of one side but rather is a demonstration of tolerance and reconciliation as well as an implementation of peace accord provisions," Dr. Khatib said.

She also cited the minister as saying that Jordan has supported the peace process from the beginning and that

## WHAT'S

- \* "Age of the Gods" at Goethe-
- \* Plastic art by John Naqashian
- \* Products of the Jordan Design Movenpick Hotel, Petra, until Jan. 10.
- \* Exhibition of colourful gifts and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein
- \* Works by several artists entitled Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Jan. 10.
- \* Works by Spanish painter Clara
- \* Painting exhibition by Hind Naqashian (Tel. 647858), until Jan. 10 and Christmas items.
- \* Works by Rula Al Shuqairi at Paving works by contemporary Ar







## Zaire demands 'devastating' counter-offensive against rebels

KINSHASA (Agencies) — Zaire's newly formed crisis government has told its demoralised and battered army to mount a "total and devastating" offensive to retake eastern border territory from Tutsi rebels.

A statement issued by Defence Minister General Likulia Bolongo Thursday night after meeting army commanders said the army would be given the resources to hit back.

"The minister of national defence has decided to put at the disposition of the chief of staff all the strategic and logistical means necessary, as quickly as possible."

"The Zairean counter-offensive must be total and devastating, spurring no act, Zairean or foreign, working in concert or intelligence with the enemy," the statement said.

Gen. Likulia took over as defence minister last week in a new government formed to try to stop the break-up of the vast central African country.

But rebels have continued to push back the Zairean army. Over Christmas they took the strategic gold mining centre of Bunia in the upper Zaire province near the Ugandan border, adding to the string of major towns they have seized since October in a rout of government forces on a front running for over 500 kilometres along Zaire's eastern border.

Military sources say that at a vital moment in the battle for Bunia, weapons belonging to the Presidential Guard stockpiled in Kinshasa and at President Mobutu Sese Seko's Gbadolite jungle palace, were withheld from troops on the front.

Ethnic Tutsis, whose ancestors settled in Zaire about 200 years ago, took up arms in October, ostensibly to defend their citizenship rights.

Rebel leaders say their objective is to topple the ailing Mr. Mobutu who has held power for 31 years.

The new government has vowed to recover all the territory from the rebels and forces from neighbouring states it accuses of backing them — Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi.

But huge obstacles face the army high command.

In recent weeks local troops have been busy trying to control mutinous soldiers roving across the east in a spree of looting, as they have been preparing for a counter-attack.

In some areas, notably to the northeast of Kisangani, local militias are forming in villages to chase out the soldiers.

Several hundred soldiers mutinied in the northeastern town of Isiro over Christmas, looting local businesses, killing a priest and several other people and leaving a trail of destruction before reaching Bumba further west.

The defence statement said army chief of staff, General Mahle Lieko Bokungu, had been instructed to recondition the entire armed forces and rid the army of such criminal elements.

Genarmes and members of the Civil Guard have been ordered to apprehend any soldiers found drunk in public places, the statement said.

Local commentators believe that discipline and motivation among the rank and file, who for long have been scarcely paid or trained, remain the key problems facing the government if it wants to solve the eastern crisis militarily.

The engagement of Zaire's best prepared and equipped

troops, the elite Presidential Guard, whose main function to date has been to protect Mr. Mobutu, may prove vital, they say.

On Saturday, rebels captured the town of Mangbwali, 40 kilometres north of Bunia, said Mike Ndoyn, a rebel-appointed regional commissioner for Ituri region. Villagers from Mangbwali confirmed it was in rebel hands.

Included in the taking was the Kilo-Moto Mining Concession.

The concession, which reportedly has reserves of 100 tons of gold, could be a major source of revenue for the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire.

The concession is run by Kimin, a firm controlled by the Belgian-Canadian Mindev Consortium. In August, 1996, the Canadian-based Barrick Gold Corp., acquired permission to explore and exploit most of the 83,000 square kilometres the mining region covers.

Mr. Ndoyn said foreign mine workers at Mangbwali had fled, and their offices and houses were badly looted.

"Clearly, a lot of equipment was stolen, but we believe the processing parts are intact," he said.

Before the rebels took another mine, at Kamituga, looters — probably from the Zairian army — stole gold ingots from the company safe and destroyed the equipment needed for deep mining. London-based newsletter Africa Confidential said.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila said last week that foreign mining companies should resume operations within the rebel-held territory soon or risk losing their leases. The Kamituga lease belongs to an Anglo-Canadian consortium of Cliff Mining and Banro.

Zaire's reported gold production in 1995 was 1,100 kilograms — with the total output probably nine times larger if illegal production were included, Zairian officials say.

It was not known how many mines are controlled by rebels, but the area they've occupied is rich in minerals including tin ore, tungsten ore and gold.

Meanwhile, the rebel forces said they had pushed from Bunia 80 kilometres east to Kasenyi and 300 kilometres west to Wamba on the road to Kisangani, the major port on the Zaire River.

On Wednesday, the last of Bunia's residents returned after fleeing to the hills when retreating Zairian soldiers looted the town and rebels captured it on Dec. 24.

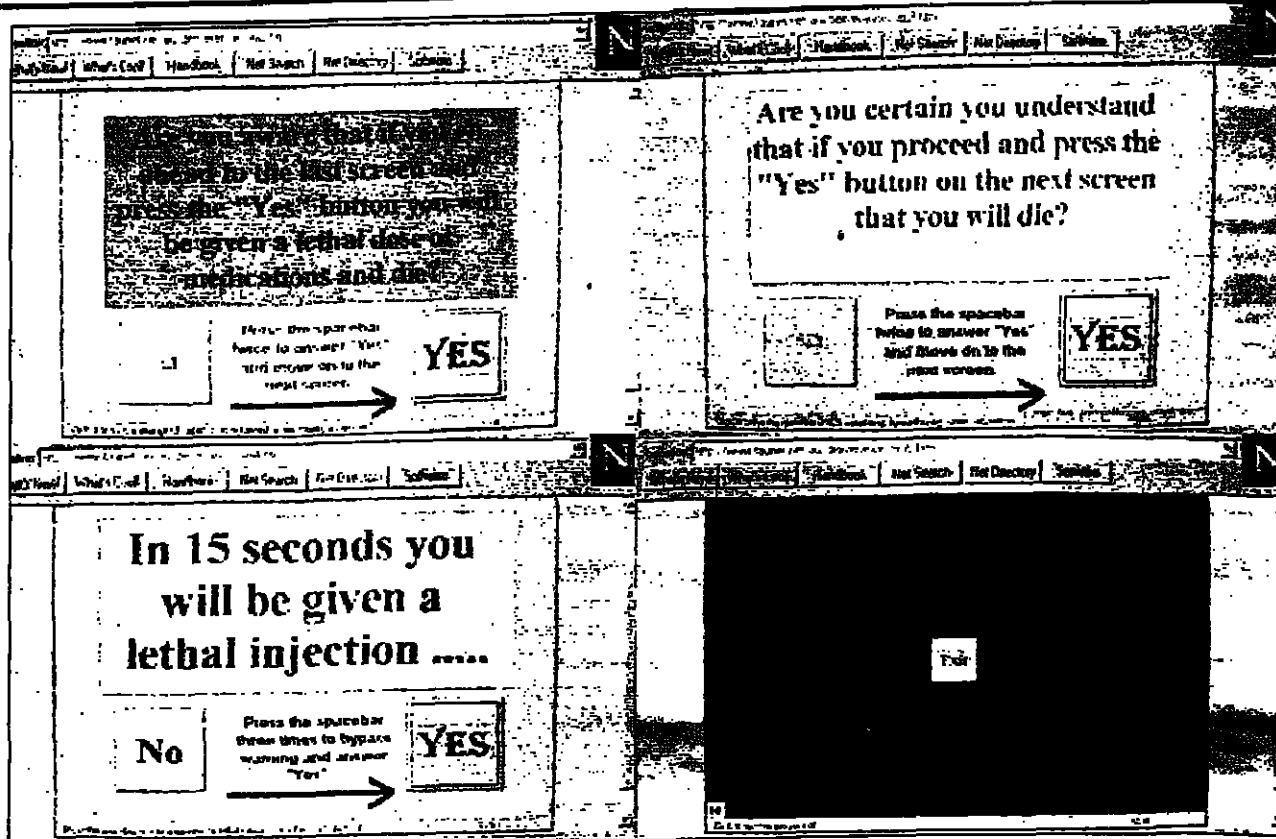
"The looting lasted three weeks here, so they had time to take everything," said businessman Morgan Morisha.

"They walked into my house, then stole my cars. It will take a long time for people of Bunia to recover."

Most Bunia residents said they were happy under rebel control. They returned for a New Year's party.

Zaire Red Cross officials reported that 240 Zairian soldiers and two civilians died in the six-hour battle for Bunia.

They said that among those fighting with the government troops were the elite Tatanga Guards from southern Zaire and Angolan mercenaries. But there was no independent confirmation.



The software package, used by euthanasia patients when self-administering a lethal injection, is shown on the Internet page set-up by pro-euthanasia groups on Jan. 3. The group has set up a fighting fund which has already had pledges of 'some thousands' of dollars which was likely to be used for a national advertising campaign in an effort to help sway politicians in favour of the world's first voluntary euthanasia law (Reuter photo)

### Australia's euthanasia group launches internet fighting fund

SYDNEY (R) — Australian euthanasia supporters have set up a fighting fund on the Internet to lobby against moves to overturn the world's first assisted suicide law.

Pro-euthanasia campaigner Dr. Philip Nitschke, dubbed "Dr. Death" by his critics, said Friday that the fund had already raised several thousand dollars in pledges since it was set up on Jan. 1.

He said the money may be used to pay for full-page newspaper advertisements to help sway Australian politicians who will vote on whether to overturn the euthanasia law later this year.

"The sort of things that may make a difference are letting politicians know they are being quite closely

watched and that this is a popular piece of legislation," Dr. Nitschke told Reuters.

In September, Dr. Nitschke assisted the first Australian, cancer patient Bob Dent, to use the euthanasia law.

The voluntary euthanasia legislation came into effect in Australia's Northern Territory in July last year, but only one person has been able to use the law and the Australian national parliament has begun moves to have it overturned.

Dr. Nitschke said visitors to the delivrance Internet site, named after the software package that allows patients to self-administer a lethal injection via a laptop computer, had risen sharply in the past month.

The site includes a lobby-

ing kit, details of the fighting fund bank account and a euthanasia request form.

Detailed descriptions of the euthanasia computer hardware and software are included, along with a simulated delivrance programme.

The simulation asks a user preparing to end their life to respond to a series of instructions, the last of which says: "in 15 seconds you will be given a lethal injection."

If you then click "yes" on the Internet site, the screen goes black around an eerily small sign saying "exit."

Cancer patient Bob Dent became the first and only person to use the programme in September after gaining the three doctors' signatures needed under the legislation.

While opinion polls show

about 75 per cent of Australians support voluntary euthanasia, the Australian parliament's lower house, the House of Representatives, voted in December to overturn the law. The anti-euthanasia bill will go before the upper house, Senate, early this year for final approval.

The euthanasia debate was renewed in December when terminally ill cancer patient Janet Mills made a public plea to be allowed to become the second person to die using the controversial law.

Ms. Mills, 52, who has a rare skin cancer called mycosis fungoides which causes the skin to disintegrate, has been unable to secure the third doctor's signature needed to end her life.

### Looting and burning mark growing Indonesian ethnic clashes — report

JAKARTA (AFP) — Ethnic violence in the Indonesian province of West Kalimantan escalated as thousands of tribesmen went on a rampage, looting and burning buildings, a report said Friday.

A mob of some 5,000 people, mostly from the indigenous Dayak ethnic group, late Thursday burned and looted scores of homes and stores belonging to migrants from Madura, an Indonesian island north of East Java, the Jakarta Post said.

Some 2,680 residents of the sub-district of Sanggau Ledo, the site of the violence, fled to Singkawang, the district capital, the daily said. Another 400 sought refuge at a local air force base.

The report said the violence was sparked by reports of the stabbing deaths of two Dayak men by a Madurese migrant.

Colonel Adityawarman of the Jakarta military headquarters confirmed the violence but said "the situation is now under control, everything is calm again."

He declined to discuss the number of victims, troops deployed and refugees, saying the data was still being confirmed. Military and police sources on the scene refused to comment.

The Suara Pembaruan evening daily said the head of the Sambas district that covers Sanggau Ledo, has called on people in the riot-hit area to refrain from leaving their homes between 9:30 p.m. and 4:00 a.m.

"Unless there is a pressing reason, people should not be, and not gather in groups, outside homes, not be on the street and carry sharp weapons," a circular issued by the district head, Tarya Aryanto, said, according to the daily.

District legislator H. Zainal told the Kompas daily that 90 houses had been burned in Sanggau Ledo and scores of houses in migration settlements in the area had also been looted and burned.

The daily also quoted a refugee in Singkawang as saying that the attackers, many armed with machetes and axes, looted private possessions, including livestock, before setting fire to the houses.

A resident source in Singkawang, who declined to be identified, said reports filtering from Sanggau Ledo said the town was calm Friday but "there are a lot of soldiers there."

Clashes between the two ethnic groups began Sunday, and violence Monday left five dead and at least nine

others injured, reports said.

The official Indonesian News Agency (Antara) quoted West Kalimantan military chief Namuri Anum as saying six people suspected of triggering the unrest Sunday had been arrested for questioning.

Major General Anum said the violence had been sparked by a dispute during a pop music concert in Sanggau Ledo Sunday evening but said that the two people rumored to have died were only injured.

The dispute was apparently over a woman, a Singkawang source said Thursday, adding that hostility between the indigenous population and migrants ran deep.

The Sangau Ledo district, with a population of some 12,000 people, is home to several plantations raising rubber, coconut, pepper and palm oil.

Thursday's violence erupted despite efforts by the head of the local military district to calm tensions by calling a meeting with local leaders.

The Jakarta Post said an unspecified number of police mobile brigade members and troops had been dispatched from the provincial capital to restore order in Sanggau Ledo and its surroundings.

### India's Congress still backs premier

NEW DELHI (R) — India's Congress Party unanimously chose Sitaram Kesri as its new parliamentary leader Friday and the veteran politician quickly reiterated support for Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's minority government.

Congress lawmakers elected Mr. Kesri to replace former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao as the head of the parliamentary delegation, party officials said.

Mr. Kesri wasted no time in seeking to dispel recurrent rumours that a reinvigorated Congress, which suffered its worst ever defeat in general elections last year, would set out to challenge Mr. Deve Gowda's United Front minority coalition.

"All this talk about our withdrawing support to the United Front is wrong. It is a ploy to frighten you," Mr. Kesri told a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP).

Deve Gowda's centre-left minority coalition depends on Congress' support to survive a challenge from the Hindu nationalist opposition in the lower house of parliament.

Mr. Kesri, who became Congress Party president in September when Mr. Rao stepped down under pressure, beat back a youthful challenge for the party's parliamentary leadership post from former Cabinet Minister Rajesh Pilot, who had earlier won backing from Rao loyalists.

"The consensus is in favour of Sitaram Kesri," former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh told the CPP meeting.

Mr. Rao, who was prime minister from 1991 until last May and spearheaded a drive to open up India's economy, quit under pressure as CPP leader last month.

Congress, which has led India for all but four years since independence in 1947, suffered its worst ever defeat in general elections last year.

### France: NATO command issue tests U.S.

PARIS (R) — French Defence Minister Charles Millon said in an interview published Friday that Paris still wanted the U.S. to accept the idea that a European officer should be head of NATO's Southern Command, but was flexible over the timing.

"This is an essential point which has the value of a test of the real willingness of the Americans to recognise the European defence identity," Mr. Millon told the French daily La Croix in an interview published Friday.

Washington has rejected appeals by Paris for a Euro-

pean to run the Naples-based Southern Command, headed by an American since 1949, as part of NATO reforms after the cold war to give Europeans a greater role in their own defence.

"While an accord on this principle is essential, we are flexible over how it is put into place, because in practice it will take time to reform the alliance's structures," Mr. Millon said, offering no details.

"I'm sure that an accord should be reached," he added.

France has campaigned for months to get the United

States to give a European the Southern Command, which controls allied forces in the Mediterranean including Bosnia and the shores of the Middle East and Africa.

France has said it is not demanding European control over the U.S. Sixth Fleet, based in Naples. The dispute has put extra strain on ties already frayed by rows ranging from leadership of the U.N. to Zaire.

Paris has won support from Germany, Italy and Spain for its demands. It argues that the United States already names the supreme

commander of NATO forces in Europe and should let regional commands come under European leadership.

Mr. Millon, however, did not repeat threats he made in September to freeze France's reintegration into NATO's military structure, which it quit in the 1960s, if the United States did not agree.

He said renewal of the alliance had to be based "on a new Euro-American partnership, which means that the European defence identity is recognised. The Americans now agree that this move is legitimate."

### 2 Rwandans sentenced to death for genocide

KIGALI (R) — A court in the southeastern Rwandan town of Kibungu found two Rwandan Hutu guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity Friday and sentenced them to death, state radio and officials said.

Rwandan Radio said Deo Bizimana, a former medical assistant, and Egide Gatanazi, a former administrator, were given 15 days to appeal against the death sentences — the first judgments to be issued by a Rwandan court concerning the 1994 genocide.

Both men received a four-hour trial in Kibungu before a tribunal of three judges on Dec. 27 and pleaded not guilty. They had no defence lawyers.

They were the first suspects tried under a 1996 genocide law. Some 90,000

Rwandan Hutu are crammed into jails accused of taking part in the mass slaughter of an estimated 800,000 minority Tutsis and Hutu moderates by Hutu troops, militiamen and mobs.

"They have been sentenced to death... They can appeal and they have 15 days to appeal," Gerard Gahima, acting deputy justice minister, told Reuters in the capital.

Asked whether the two men received a fair trial in Kibungu without being represented by defence lawyers, Mr. Gahima said: "Under our law it is permissible for people to be tried without lawyers. If people think you can sweep the genocide of one million people under the carpet because there are no lawyers, they can think again."

"These crimes were committed in broad daylight. Either there were eyewitnesses or there were not. There are no complex legal issues involved. It is an issue of fact," Mr. Gahima added.

He said more trials were scheduled for next week but he had no details. Under Rwandan law executions are to be carried out by firing squad.

Observers in the Kibungu Court on Dec. 27 said the two defendants were booed and prosecutors were cheered from the crowded public benches. Prosecutors passed written notes to the judges.

A Hutu Rwandan refugee lobby group, the Rally for the Return of Refugees and Democracy to Rwanda, has dismissed the trials as "a

mockery of justice" and said Hutu returnees being detained are being falsely accused by people who wanted their property.

The U.N. Human Rights office in Kigali said Thursday more than 2,000 Rwandan Hutus, part of 460,000 refugees who returned home from Tanzania last month, have been arrested as genocide suspects.

An International Tribunal on the Rwandan Genocide opened its first trials at its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1996 but it cannot impose the death penalty on those found guilty.

The genocide erupted in April 1994 and ended three months later when Tutsi rebels drove the Hutu-led government and its security forces into exile in Zaire.

### Kashmir bomb blast kills 4

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — A powerful bomb concealed in a scooter-taxi exploded near Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's house Friday, killing four people, police and witnesses said.

Six others were injured in the blast on Gupkar Road, barely half a kilometre from Mr. Abdullah's heavily-guarded residence here.

Mr. Abdullah, a pro-India Muslim who became the chief minister in October, was in Jammu, Kashmir state's winter capital, officials said.

Kashmir Home Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar, who also lives nearby and escaped an assassination attempt on Jan. 1, was at his house but was not injured.

Mr. Sagar is also a Muslim. A police chief said the bomb, later claimed by a pro-Pakistan separatist group, was hidden in a scooter-taxi at a parking zone.

Islamic separatists in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, have continued attacks despite the first elected government taking office in the Himalayan state in October following seven years of New Delhi rule.

More than 15,000 people have died in separatist violence since 1989, India blames Pakistan for fuelling the separatist campaign. Pakistan denies the charge.

The bombing came two days after Mr. Sagar and four other Kashmir minis-

ters escaped a grenade attack at a mosque here. Two police officers were injured in that attack.

Four shops and a house were badly damaged and some 10 parked cars and scooters were destroyed in Friday's massive blast, which was heard two kilometres away.

The windows of scores of nearby houses were blown out.

"It appears the explosives were in a three-wheeler," said Inspector General of Police Gopal Sharma.

Police said two of the dead were brothers who were selling vegetables near the bomb site. The other dead were yet to be identified.

Mr. Rao, who was prime minister from 1991 until last May and spearheaded a drive to open up India's economy, quit under pressure as CPP leader last month.

Congress, which has led India for all but four years since independence in 1947, suffered its worst ever defeat in general elections last year.

### Cambodian editor shot in suspected 'political' attack

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The editor of a Cambodian newspaper was shot in the stomach and severely beaten by a gang of uniformed militants in a politically motivated attack here, industry sources said Friday.

Leng Sam Ang, 26, who is editor in chief of Kumit Koan Khmer (The Thought of Khmer Children), was attacked by at least five men dressed in military uniform late Thursday, his publisher Cheng Sokna said.

He was Friday recovering in hospital following the attack which took place as he left Mr. Cheng Sokna's home after a huge birthday

party held for First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh and attended by about 2,000 guests.

After being beaten unconscious, Leng Sam Ang was pushed through the front door of the house where his wife was waiting and was shot once in the stomach with an AK-47 assault rifle, Mr. Cheng Sokna said.

Mr. Cheng Sokna and the president of a Cambodian Journalists Association both said they believed the attack was political. Mr. Leng Sam Ang's newspaper supports Prince Ranariddh's royalist FUNCINPEC party, the publisher said.

"I think this was an attack against our newspaper," Mr. Cheng Sokna said. Police officials said they have begun an investigation.

Pin Samkhon, the president of the Khmer Journalists Association, agreed the attack was politically motivated, adding that the assailants had apparently stalked out Mr. Cheng Sokna's home before the assault.

"I think this is politics. His paper is close to FUNCINPEC and he always accuses (Second Prime Minister) Hun Sen and the CPP. I think his strong stories do not agree with some peo-

ple," Pin Samkhon, a spokesman for Prince Ranariddh Friday reacted strongly to the shooting and beating of the young editor, saying it was a political attack.

"The cabinet of the first prime minister condemns strongly this act of violence and is astonished by this criminal act," he said.

"Once again FUNCINPEC is threatened and motivated by some people. We must investigate," Prince Ranariddh said, concerned with this, he added.

Residents of the northern California town of Red Bluff are bracing for heavy winter storms (Reuter photo)

### Ice age warns

PARIS (AFP) — Wild winter weather continued to grip the northern hemisphere Friday with deaths and disruption reported from Asia through Europe to North America, where a US academic warned that a new ice age may be entering a new phase.

The weather has been responsible for at least 278 deaths north of the Equator since Christmas Eve, but snow falls almost hourly in the snowless or elderly sections of the cold.

Traffic accidents have been added to the number of deaths and a number of stranded motorists have frozen to death before rescue services could reach them.

In South Korea, snow and road accidents caused by the icy conditions killed 40 dead and some 500 injured since the New Year.

Three hill-walkers froze to death on Mount Sorak and one others are missing in a blizzard which swept Kangwon province.

Europe, however, has been worst hit, with more than 220 fatalities attributed to the cold.

In France, where the death toll rose overnight to 22, ice and snow paralysed practically all transport in the south-eastern Rhone Valley, leaving 10,000 people stranded overnight.

With up to 30 trains blocked in the region, some passengers were put up in hotels and makeshift shelters, but many spent the night in train carriages blocked by the sub-zero temperatures.

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Elsewhere in Europe, a bus flipped over on a snow-covered Spanish road killing four people. The other 24 people on the bus — all believed to be Spaniards — were injured in the incident overnight near the town of Sorra, 200 kilometres north of Madrid.

A train derailed in the north of France, killing one person and injuring 39 others.

On the coast, heavy snow and ice blocked roads and caused traffic jams in the north of France.

In the United States, heavy snow and ice caused traffic jams and accidents in the north-east.

In the south-east, heavy snow and ice caused traffic jams and accidents in the north-east.

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Residents of the northern California town of Guerneville canoe along a street after the flooded Russian River turned this downtown street into a waterway on Jan. 2. Flooding continues in much of the Pacific northwest following heavy winter storms (Reuters photo)

## Ice age warning as weather death toll nears 300

PARIS (AFP) — Wild winter weather continued to grip the northern hemisphere Friday with deaths and disruption reported from Asia through Europe to North America, where a U.S. academic warned that the continent may be entering a new ice age.

The weather has been responsible for at least 278 deaths north of the Equator since Christmas Eve, but the toll rises almost hourly as the homeless or elderly succumb to the cold.

Traffic accidents have also added to the number of dead, and a number of stranded motorists have frozen to death before rescue services could reach them.

In South Korea, snow storms and road accidents caused by the icy conditions left 40 dead and some 500 injured since the New Year. Three hill-walkers froze to death on Mount Sorak and nine others are missing in a blizzard which swept Kangwon province.

Europe, however, has been worst hit, with more than 220 fatalities attributed to the cold.

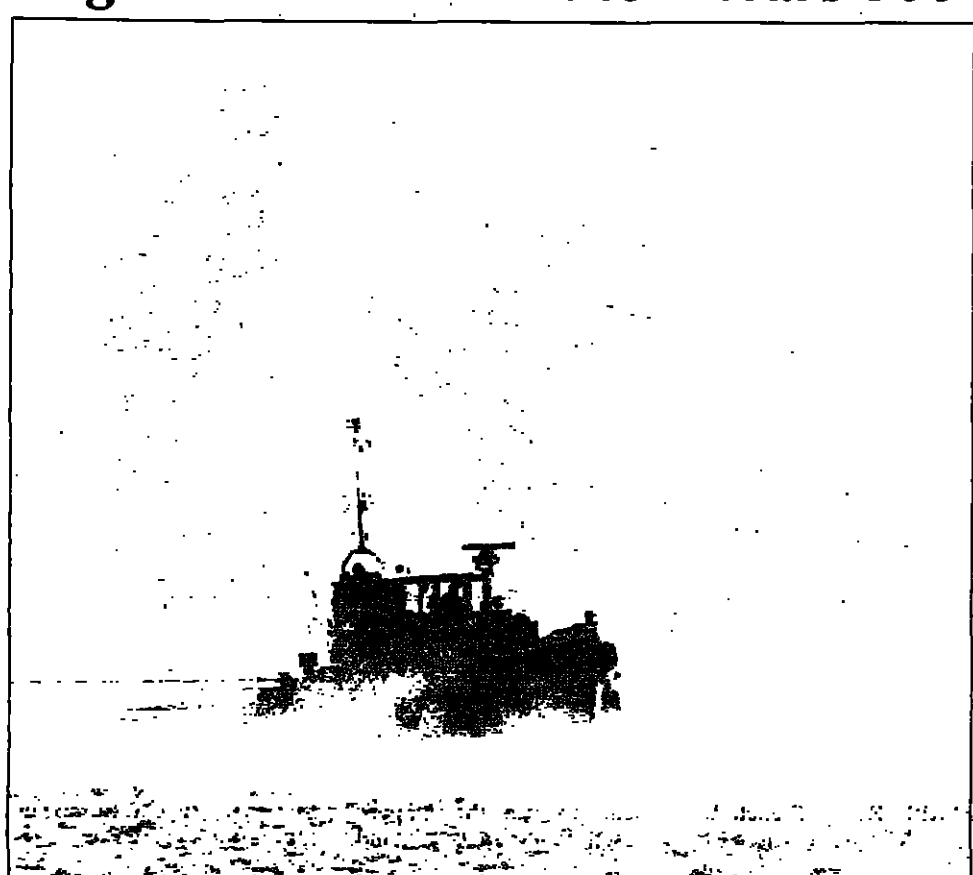
In France, where the death toll rose overnight to 22, ice and snow paralysed practically all transport in the southeastern Rhone Valley, leaving 10,000 people stranded overnight.

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A tug boat on the River Elbe makes its way through Hamburg's frozen-over harbour on Jan. 2. About 400 kilometres of the River Elbe was closed from Dresden to Hamburg Thursday. Europe went into the New Year in the grip of a biting cold spell that brought heavy snowfalls, which disrupted rail and road traffic and caused many flight cancellations (Reuters photo)

Many other northern and central Spanish regions have been blanketed with snow, and some 30 villages have been cut off by heavy snowfalls which have also snarled traffic outside Madrid. Heavy rains caused flooding in Andalusia.

A further four frozen bodies were found Friday in Germany, taking the total to 39 dead from the glacial conditions. At least 11 of them died in fires linked to problems with heating systems.

On the other side of the Atlantic, flash floods and mudslides on North America's Western seaboard killed at least 14 people and forced thousands of people to flee their homes from central California to Washington state.

The storm was deadliest in Washington state, where the 12 people were killed over the past 10 days.

One person was confirmed dead in California and one in Oregon in the storm that battered the northwest with torrential rains and snow.

A search and rescue effort was called off for three hikers who climbed Washington's Mount Shasta over the weekend.

Forecasters said a new storm front should move through the region but would bring dry weather behind it. Relentless rain has created the worst flooding in 40 years in Reno, Nevada.

Television networks showed images of cars bobbing down flooded streets, mobile homes sliding down banks of mud and rescue operations on everything from canoe to horseback.

California Governor Pete Wilson declared a state of emergency in 25 counties, with National Guardsmen deployed to assist fleeing residents and low-risk prisoners drafted in to fill sandbags.

The northern part of the west coast was hammered over the past week by snowstorms that shut major roads and stranded people.

Falling temperatures melted snow and a series of storms created floodwaters that virtually shut down many cities.

Some 50,000 people were evacuated late Thursday in Yuba City and Marysville, at the confluence of two rivers 160 kilometres northwest of San Francisco.

The chairman of the Atmospheric Sciences Department at the University of Missouri said the current cold snap in the United States could be the precursor to a "little ice age" lasting several years.

North America can expect "a natural cold period for the next 20 or so years," Ernest Kung said Thursday in a statement, adding that it was a recurrent phenomenon.

"About every 15 to 25 years, you can recognise a change in the patterns of the global circulation of the atmosphere," he said.

He attributed the current cold snap in the United States to unusually warm surface temperatures in the central Pacific Ocean.

The warm water creates a high pressure area which forces the jet stream to move around it, to the north, curling around Alaska then flowing southward below Canada and the United States, bringing Arctic temperatures with it.

## Yugoslav official: Opposition won nine Belgrade districts

VIENNA, Austria (Agencies) — Yugoslavia's foreign minister conceded Friday that opponents of Slobodan Milosevic had won a majority of Belgrade's municipal districts, but that did not necessarily translate into control of the capital.

Opponents of Mr. Milosevic said the move was insufficient, and that their protests would continue until he recognised their win in the main city council as well.

Milan Milutinovic, a close associate of the Serbian president, said in a letter to Danish Foreign Minister Niels Petersen that the opposition coalition Zajedno, or Together, had won nine of 16 Belgrade district councils.

Mr. Petersen is the chairman of the trans-Atlantic Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which sent a delegation to Belgrade to study the contested elections on Dec. 21.

The delegation, led by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, also concluded that the opposition had won nine of 16 Belgrade districts, as well as 13 disputed cities.

The opposition claims Mr. Milosevic stole their election victories, and have staged protests almost daily since the Nov. 17 vote was overturned. The protests have marked the toughest challenge to the authoritarian Serb leader since he took power almost 10 years ago.

In Belgrade, voters in each of the 16 districts choose representatives to a district council and to the main Belgrade council. Those representatives are elected separately, so even if the opposition won on the district level, it might not translate into control of the city council.

Because of a series of election reruns ordered by courts loyal to Mr. Milosevic, it was never clear how many districts Mr. Milosevic's Socialists said it had won.

But in the letter, a copy of which was obtained by the Associated Press, Mr. Milutinovic said: "The coalition 'Zajedno' won the majority in nine municipalities in Belgrade."

He did not elaborate or say anything about the elections to the main Belgrade Council.

In Belgrade, opposition leader Zoran Djindjic said that Mr. Milutinovic "obviously rejected the OSCE report."

"Now, the question is what will member countries do about it. As far as we are concerned, we will continue our protests until the unconditional recognition of the Nov. 17 results."

Miroslav Labus, vice president of Mr. Djindjic's Democratic Party, said the letter indicated that Mr. Milutinovic did not recognise opposition victories in Belgrade or six other towns. Mr. Milutinovic said Mr. Milosevic's Socialists and their allies won those towns.

Mr. Milosevic was assailed Friday by a fresh attack from erstwhile allies over the annulled election results, but his beleaguered regime gave no sign of caving in to huge opposition street protests.

The Serbian Writers Union accused Mr. Milosevic of bringing the country to the verge of civil war over his government's refusal to accept opposition victories in the Nov. 17 local elections.

An Association of Teachers, Lawyers and Doctors meanwhile also issued a strongly worded statement denouncing the "arrogant and autistic government" in Belgrade.

Their statements added to the growing pressure on Mr. Milosevic a day after the Serbian Orthodox Church also lent its support to the opposition.

But, bolstered by the support of the army, police and state media, the regime appeared no closer to backing down in the face of criticism at home and abroad.

"By senseless vote stealing, your party has dealt a blow to the state, the constitution and the law, and by your incomprehensible decisions you have led Serbia to the verge of civil war," the writers' association said in an open letter to Mr. Milosevic.

It also accused him of provoking the clashes in Belgrade between rival pro- and anti-government protestors on Dec. 24, which left one person dead and 100 injured.

The group of "professional walkers" — hundreds of professionals such as teachers, doctors, lecturers, writers, lawyers and judges and intellectuals who have been taking part in the marches — was even more scathing.

"We want to live in peace and freedom in a parliamentary and democratic state ... not in chaos, in a primitive, totalitarian, dictatorial regime," its statement read.

One of the signatories, art historian Irina Subotic, said they reflected carefully on their position before coming out in support of the opposition, as they had in many cases supported Mr. Milosevic when he rose to power.

The Serbian Writers' Union was also a former Milosevic supporter, while the Serbian Orthodox Church, another erstwhile ally, Thursday joined in the criticism too.

"Force has been used by the regime with the intention of stifling the freely expressed will of the people," it said. "The blood of the innocent has been shed."

French Foreign Minister Hervé De Charette stressed Friday that the crisis in Belgrade would only be resolved by the recognition of opposition victories in municipal ballots.

He said President Milosevic had to implement the recommendations of a report compiled by Mr. Gonzalez for the OSCE.

"It was at the request of the Serbian authorities themselves that the OSCE appointed Felipe Gonzalez on a fact-finding mission on the results of municipal elections," he said.

"The crisis was sparked by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's questioning of these results," he said, cited by government spokesman Alain Lamassouse.

"For the French government, as for its European partners, the only way out of the crisis is for the public authorities to accept this election result, as validated by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe," Mr. De Charette said.

## Bosnia's parliament meets for first time

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb politicians convened the first full session of the country's peacetime parliament Friday, ending three months of disputes over venues and other symbolic issues.

The 42-member House of Representatives, elected in post-war polls in September, met in Sarajevo's city centre at the National Museum and a former front line.

The parliament was to approve cabinet nominations submitted by the three-man collective presidency, comprising Muslim Chairman Alija Izetbegovic, Serb member Momcilo Krajcinovic and Croat representative Kresimir Zubak.

Serb deputies boycotted a would-be inaugural session of parliament in the Bosnian capital in October, snubbing foreign dignitaries who had flown in for the ceremony.

The nationalist Serbs had cited objections to the venue in the city centre and to the text of an oath pledging loyalty to Bosnia as a single state.

Since then the senior Serb parliament member has signed the "solemn declaration" and international mediators said the other Serb deputies were expected to follow suit.

A 15-member upper chamber, the House of Peoples, was also to convene Friday for the first time — in the Sarajevo suburb of Lukavica in Serb-controlled territory.

Serb nationalist leaders have succeeded in persuading their Muslim and Croat rivals to accept rotating the venue for government meetings between the country's Serb republic and Muslim-Croat Federation.

Just getting the parliament to meet at all is considered an achievement by Western diplomats anxious to see the new government begin functioning.

## Pakistan says it has not formally recognised Taliban regime

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistan has not formally recognised the Taliban regime but it has ended its dealings with the ousted Afghan government after President Burhanuddin Rabbani lost authority in Kabul, the Foreign Office said Thursday.

Mr. Rabbani's mandate to rule Afghanistan had run out much before its Sept. 27 ouster by the Taliban Islamic militia, a foreign office spokesman said.

However, Pakistan continued to deal with his administration as long as it had the authority in Kabul, he said adding that as Mr. Rabbani lost power, Pakistan's dealings with his regime had come to an end.

He said Pakistan was considering reopening its embassy in Kabul, but was unsure when its ambassador would go to the Afghan capital.

Pakistan's embassy was gutted in a mob attack on Sept. 6, in which one employee was killed and diplomats were beaten up.

The attack, allegedly carried out by pro-Rabbani groups, came shortly after the key western Afghan city of Herat fell to the Taliban.

The Rabbani regime had said Pakistan's alleged military backing led to the Taliban victory, a charge denied by Islamabad.

Meanwhile, the Afghan capital was again attacked by opposition jets Wednesday, with Taliban gunners sending a heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire lighting up the night sky.

The target of the New Year's Day attack, which took place just after 8:00 p.m. local time (1530 GMT), was most likely Kabul Airport, and two loud bangs were believed to have come from that area, witnesses said.

Within seconds of the jet being heard high in the night sky, gunners dotted around the city centre sent a hail of tracer bullets, canon shells and flares which illuminated the clear night sky.

However, how many bombs were dropped and on what location — if any at all — could not be immediately confirmed.

The ferocity of the ground fire made it almost impossible to distinguish what booms were incoming bombs or outgoing fire from the city streets.

The recent spate of jet attacks, most likely by forces of northern warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostum — a key figure in the anti-Taliban alliance — are becoming an almost daily fixture for the capital.

Air raids on the beleaguered capital have intensified in recent days, seemingly an angry response to Taliban gains north of Kabul made last week.

Taliban military sources told AFP Wednesday that their forces had made some further advances into villages south of the key Bagram Air Base — controlled by forces hostile to the Taliban — but this could not be independently confirmed.

The base is not believed to be in current use to launch bombing raids, but its capture by the Islamic militia would be a major strategic blow to forces opposed to the Taliban.

## Singapore premier savours victory after vote landslide

SINGAPORE (R) — Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong savoured victory Friday after his party's best general election result for 16 years.

Mr. Goh, whose People's Action Party (PAP) won 65 per cent of the vote and all but two seats, had staked his prestige on keeping the opposition presence in parliament to a minimum.

"This is a watershed election," Mr. Goh told a news conference, adding voters had "rejected Western-style liberal democracy and freedoms, putting individual rights over that of society" which he said had been "promoted by the Western media."

Under the heading "A handsome win for Mr. Goh," the pro-government Business Times said in its editorial that Mr. Goh's victory was as good as could have been expected.

"More than anyone else, he was big," the newspaper said.

"This is a magnificent triumph for Goh," agreed Narayan Ganesan, senior lecturer in South East Asian affairs at the National University of Singapore. "As leader of the team, Mr. Goh can claim the prize for winning — unquestioned authority."

The PAP won the election before a single vote was cast when opposition parties decided to contest only 36 seats in the 83-member parliament. The opposition hoped concentrating on few seats would give them a better chance of winning representation. They held four seats in the previous assembly.

But Mr. Goh said at the start of the nine-day election campaign he did not want any opposition members in parliament disrupting the progress of a country his party has helped make rich through paternalistic pro-business policies.

Mr. Goh thwarted opposition attempts to focus minds on rising living costs and demands for curbs on the PAP's dominance. The party has ruled Singapore since it became self-governing in 1959.

Political analysts had suggested Mr. Goh's authority might be damaged if the poll showed an erosion of support for the PAP.

The ruling party's share of the vote fell steadily from a high of 77.7 per cent in 1980 to a low of 61 per cent in 1991 just after Mr. Goh took over the premiership from Lee Kuan Yew.

The PAP used every tactic at its disposal to win votes, from a barrage of personal attacks on opposition leaders to promises of extra money for wards with government supporters.

## New U.N. chief Annan touts staff cuts and money

UNITED NATIONS (R) — Beginning work as the new U.N. secretary-general, Kofi Annan promised to streamline the bureaucracy of a world body in debt because the United States has refused to pay its bills.

The 58-year-old Ghanaian, a U.N. career official, began his first full day in office Thursday, succeeding Boutros Ghali of Egypt, whose bid for a second five-year term was blocked by Washington in a bitter campaign for allegedly not instituting enough U.N. reforms.

"The member states have made it clear that they want changes and they have given us unanimous support," Mr. Annan said.

"And I think together we can achieve a lot, bring about the reforms that are necessary, encourage the member states to work together, to honour their commitment to the organisation and together make the changes that are required if we are to make the United Nations as relevant as it ought to be as we move into the 21st century," he added.

His spokesman, Fred Eckhard, said Mr. Annan intended to press member states immediately on setting priorities.

"His first job is nailing down governments on some essential agreement on what the work of this organisation is to be. This means establishing priorities and then rearranging the administration to do that job and adjusting the finances."

"Administrative processes must be streamlined for more efficiency and effectiveness," Mr. Eckhard said. "It is time now to make a decision and he would like that decision to be made in the early days of his administration."

Mr. Annan in December had asked for the resignations of 23 undersecretaries-general and assistant secretaries-general, which Mr. Eckhard said he had now received. Some, however, are expected to be reappointed.

He also appointed a "provisional" staff for his executive office led by Iqbal Riza of Pakistan, a former official in the peacekeeping department Mr. Annan had led for the past three years.

Greeted by an honour guard of U.N. police and cheering staff members, Mr. Annan later Thursday kept with the tradition of his predecessors and visited the U.N. meditation room. His wife Nane, a Swedish artist and lawyer, accompanied him to the entrance of the room but did not go inside.

"This is my first day. It is like the first day in school. Everyone expects a lot from you and you get into it with considerable trepidation," Mr. Annan said.

U.N. officials said he had spoken to President Bill Clinton shortly after being sworn in by the U.N. General Assembly on Dec. 17 and was invited to come to Washington as soon as a date could be arranged.



## Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation  
Established 1975

محور النشر: مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية  
الطبعة: 1975

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.

Subscription and advertising rates are available from the

Jordan Times advertising department.

## Seeds of conflict

JUST AS Baruch Goldstein, who massacred Palestinian worshippers at the Al Ibrahimi Mosque three years ago, was not acting out of a vacuum so was Naom Friedman who shot at random on Palestinians in Hebron two days ago with the intent to kill. The latest attack on Palestinian civilians in Hebron suggests that the much-touted Israeli security issue needs to be seen in a more appropriate perspective. The latest attempt to kill scores of Palestinians nearly succeeded and may be repeated again and again by Jewish extremists who are determined to prevent any solution to the whole conflict.

Israel has put off the redeployment of its army in Hebron ostensibly out of concern for the safety of some 420 Jewish settlers who planted themselves in the middle of 150,000 Palestinians. It would seem more correct to suggest that the unarmed majority needs protection from the fully armed minority rather than the other way round. The fanatical shootings by Goldstein and Friedman, therefore, suggest that it is the Arab side which needs to arm itself against real threats from over-zealous settlers.

The Jewish community which populated part of Hebron did so after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war in open defiance of all international consensus against settlement in the occupied territories. What complicates the matter is the fact that so far the Jewish settlers in Hebron are afforded full protection by the Israeli army while the Palestinians are left with minimum security as Israel insists that Palestinian police be allowed to carry only small arms.

Many sensible Israelis, including some in the security establishment, have been calling for the evacuation of the Hebron settlers. As long as they stay in the city, fully armed with machine-guns, they will not lack providing more Goldsteins and Friedmans. Surely arrangements for Jewish worshippers at Al Ibrahimi Mosque can be worked out and security for them can be provided by Palestinian police. The Hebron settlers are only an example of the complexity of the issue of Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The present Israeli government seems to have failed to come to the conclusion that previous Israeli leaders, notably Yitzhak Rabin, have come to: that a solution short of a Palestinian state with total sovereignty over the West Bank and East Jerusalem will not endure, and that as long as Jews live on Arab lands conflict will linger and innocent blood be shed.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE CRIME committed Wednesday in Hebron reminded the world of the massacre committed at the Hebron mosque by another extremist Jew, resulting in the death of scores of worshippers, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily in an editorial. The new crime reaffirms the extremist Jews' determination to sabotage any peace agreement with the Arabs and the redeployment of Israeli forces in the Hebron region in particular, said the daily. The attack coincided with intensive, last minute efforts to formulate an agreement on Hebron and at a time when the U.S. envoy Dennis Ross was involved in putting the finishing touches to a new Palestinian-Israeli accord that could pave the ground for the following talks on a final settlement, according to the daily. The attack on the Arab residents of Hebron, continued the paper, serves as a clear message to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the Arabs, as well as the Israelis, require security and that only a just and comprehensive peace can guarantee such security for both sides. The crime in Hebron, stressed the paper, ought to serve as a reminder to the U.S. and other concerned parties to intensify their efforts to bring about a lasting and just settlement that would guarantee the peace and security in this turbulent region.

A WRITER for Al Dustour commented on the diplomatic crisis that emerged between Iran and Syria following the latter's signing of a declaration along with the Gulf states and Egypt's levelling open criticism of Tehran for its continued occupation of the Arab Gulf islands that belong to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Perhaps the Iranian-Syrian crisis and the attacks in the Tehran press against Damascus were motivated by Syria's joining the chorus of the Gulf states who demand that Tehran return the islands to Arab sovereignty, but, according to Saleh Qallab, the two sides have more bones of contention and other differences, mainly the recent Turkish-Iranian rapprochement and trade and other deals between Tehran and Ankara, given that Damascus is opposed to Turkey's policies regarding the military cooperation with Israel and the river water distribution. Tehran and Syria also do not see eye to eye with regard to Syria's involvement in the peace process and the role of the Hizbollah resistance group in southern Lebanon and also over Syria's payment of its debts to Iran which amount to \$5 billion, the writer said. He said it will be interesting to watch these developments, especially as Tehran and Damascus have had a very long honeymoon of close ties since the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979.

## Jordanian Perspective

# Netanyahu's policies only strengthening extremist camps

WEDNESDAY'S ATTACK on Palestinian civilians by an Israeli soldier clearly demonstrated the difficulties facing all of us in trying to bring about Arab-Israeli coexistence. Every bullet fired from either side at the other is another hurdle in the realisation of our hopes to see stability and security in the region after decades of conflict.

But the clearest message that Wednesday's violence sent everybody is that immense danger faces all of us if no agreement is concluded between Israel and the Palestinians over Hebron and other related issues and there is no moving on to the final status negotiations. Extremists from both sides are bent upon wrecking the achievements of the peace process and we have to take that into consideration every step of the way.

But there is indeed a marked difference between Palestinian and Israeli actions. We do not condone the kind of Hamas and Islamic jihad suicide attacks targeting Israeli civilians, but we cannot but observe that the Palestinians are fighting to throw out the Israeli occupiers from Palestinian land.

On the other hand, there cannot be any justification for Israelis attacking Palestinians. For one thing, the Israelis have no right to be in Palestinian lands in the first place, and the Israeli use of violence against Palestinians is nothing but sheer oppression and reflects arrogance stemming from military power.

The responsibility of Wednesday's violence and any further attacks, from either side, lies squarely with the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose headline positions and statements are fortifying extremists.

Netanyahu's message to his people that an Israeli rede-

ployment in Hebron does not mean Israel leaving the West Bank town and that there is no question whatsoever of the Jewish state ever leaving the Palestinian territories works both ways. On the one hand, it might be a carefully phrased political message to assure some Israelis. But, as we saw Wednesday, it has done more to strengthen extremist approaches among some Israelis.

**"By doing away with the political shackles that are holding him down in parliament and picking up a new thread with Labour, Netanyahu would only be serving the future interests of his country and people since it is abundantly clear that his policies so far have given neither peace nor stability to the state of Israel"**

For us in Jordan, the happenings in the Palestinian territories and the snags in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations mean only one thing: What we have been working for over the years is being demolished day by day and the goal of comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace is getting farther by the hour.

We in Jordan were the first to argue for time to be given

to the Netanyahu government. We believed that the realities on the ground and an understanding of the requirements of peace would gradually convince the Likud government and make it realise that there could not be peace without giving up Palestinian land and recognising the Palestinians' political rights, with all that it implies. But what we saw since then has been totally against what we hoped for. The extremist camp in Israel is hardening its position and, even if Netanyahu had any inclination to even consider the territorial and political rights of the Palestinians, he is now blocked by his own desire for political survival. Up to eight ministers in his cabinet have reportedly warned him that they would resign in the event of a Hebron handover to the Palestinians.

Indeed, there is a way out for Netanyahu if he is genuinely interested in making just and comprehensive peace with the Palestinians while also ensuring his own political survival. And that lies in a political alliance with the opposition Labour Party. Joining hands with Labour would do away with Netanyahu's need to depend on hardline religious parties in parliament while also giving a much needed impetus to the entire peace process.

Of course, there are numerous ifs and buts in the way for a serious coalition agreement between Likud and Labour, but Netanyahu could do it if he had the determination to do so.

By doing away with the political shackles that are holding him down in parliament and picking up a new thread with Labour, Netanyahu would only be serving the future interests of his country and people since it is abundantly clear that his policies so far have given neither peace nor stability to the state of Israel.

By Dr. Musa Keilani

## THE WEEK IN PRINT

# Settlements are in the way of peace and stability in the region

REVIEWED BY  
ELIA NASRALLAH

THE LOCAL dailies in the past week covered issues ranging from the latest attack on the Palestinians in Hebron and the situation in the Palestinian lands in light of Israel's procrastination in implementing the Oslo accords to domestic matters and pan-Arab affairs.

The attack on Palestinians in Hebron on the first day of 1997 offers an indication that there can be no peaceful coexistence between the Jewish settlers and the Palestinians, said Rashid Hassan, a writer for Al Aswad daily.

As long as the settlers continue to insist on their presence amidst the Palestinian population and as long as they carry arms and are ready to attack the Arab population there can never be any peace or stability in the region, he said.

The writer said that the latest Israeli crime in Hebron places the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians to the test and sounds the alarm about future developments and massacres should the settlers be allowed to stay in the heart of the Arab city.

The present Israeli government is the worst that ever existed in Israel since the creation of the Jewish state because it is one that backs terrorism and encourages the Jewish settlers to commit crimes against the Palestinians, charged Mahmoud Rimawi, a writer for Al Ra'i daily.

The writer said that by pretending to be negotiating with the Palestinians and delaying the implementation of the Oslo accords, the Israeli government is giving the settlers and its troops the green light to commit atrocities and seize more Arab territory for building settlements.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is not only condoning the acts of the settlers but also encouraging aggression and protecting the murderers, he said.

Israel and its allies are trying to mislead the world by appearing to be condemning the attack on the

Palestinians in Hebron but both Israel and these allies have failed to condemn the settlement programme which is the cause of all evils, said the writer who stressed that only by the removal of the settlements can peace be guaranteed.

Taher Adwan, a writer for Al Dustour, echoed the call for an immediate removal of the Jewish settlement in Hebron, stressing that it is the cause of all crimes and the main stumbling block in the path of a lasting peace.

The writer said that when Goldstein killed the worshippers in the Hebron mosque, the Israeli government gave the murderer's group Gush Amonim a reward by allowing them to pray in the Ibrahimi Mosque and preventing the Muslims from doing so, recalled the writer.

He said the Israeli government is expected to reward the extremists now, following Wednesday's attack on the Palestinian civilians, by enlarging the Jewish settlement inside the Arab city.

A writer for Al Ra'i criticised the presence of Jewish settlers inside the Arab city of Hebron as a time bomb that could explode any minute, stressing that the crime committed in Hebron two days ago would not be the last as long as the armed settlers continue to live in the Arab city.

Ahmad Misleh said that the criminal who was encouraged by his government and the Israeli forces to commit his crime would most probably be emulated by another settler and another criminal in the days ahead.

The writer said that as long as the present Israeli government follows its present aggressive policies and as long as it continues to encourage the settlers to kill Arabs and seize their lands, the chances of coexistence and peace remain dim. He added that occupation must be terminated once and for all so that peace can be reestablished.

Calling on the government to prevent the organisation of an Israeli industrial exhibition in Jordan, a writer

for Al Dustour said that by so doing Jordan will be paying the Israelis with their own coin.

Taher Adwan said that the Israeli government is obstructing trade between Jordan and the Palestinian lands, and even between Israel and Jordan, and continues to exercise repression on the Arab people.

The writer said that the government is not having a neutral stand as it gives attention and a warm welcome to Israeli journalists while knowing that Israel mistreats Jordanian journalists and gives them no facilities for their work.

The writer said that the Ministry of Information, which gives all kinds of facilities to the Israelis, has failed to demand that Israel treat Jordanian on equal footing.

The government, he said, should take measures that would deter any person in Jordan from organising functions that reflect normalisation of relations and so it will be following the example of the Israeli government itself in this matter.

A writer for Al Ra'i criticised the Ministry of Education for extending leave without pay, which ends in August of this year, taken by its teachers at a time when the ministry's schools lack sufficient cadres.

It is a well-known fact that ministry schools in towns and rural regions still lack sufficient men and women teachers, but, regrettably, the ministry is doing nothing to fill the gap and meet the shortage.

He said the ministry ought to call the teachers on leave back to work and meet the shortage. Since there is a lack of teachers around the country, the Ministry of Education should mobilise all its potential to deal with the situation and help the so-called less developed areas and less fortunate schools receive treatment equal with that of schools in main towns.

Fahed Fanek, a writer for Al Ra'i, discussed Saudi Arabian-American relations in the wake of last June explosion that killed 19 American troops.

He said now that Saudi

Arabia has declared that Iran is responsible for the attack, because the accused admitted to have received training and weapons in Iran, the U.S. is refraining from doing anything against Tehran.

Washington had earlier threatened to attack any party that would be proved to have had a hand in the attack, but it is retreating from this position.

The writer said that 40 Shiite Saudis who have been jailed after admitting to have been the perpetrators of the explosion said that they had visited Iran and received training on carrying out their attack, but in Washington's view this is not enough evidence involving Iran in the attack and, instead, it is retreating from its position for fear that the Iranians would unleash retaliatory attacks on American interests around the world.

An item of political analysis in Al Dustour stressed that the Jordan-Israel peace treaty has never interfered in Jordan's fulfilling its pan-Arab commitments nor has it ever prevented the Kingdom from rising to the occasion, whenever the circumstances arose.

His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan have both emphasised the Kingdom's stand with regard to the peace process and their demand that the provisions of all peace accords be respected and implemented in full.

In his recent visit to Jordan, recalled the article, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy heard Jordan's views presented to him clearly and openly and listened to Jordan's demand that Israel remain committed, in deed rather than word, to all the accords concluded with the Palestinians.

It said that the peace treaty has never stopped Jordan from openly declaring its unwavering support for the Palestinians in their struggle to regain their lands and establish their independent state on Palestinian soil.

## LETTERS

# Afghanis need support

To the Editor:

AFGHAN'S PEOPLE, and women in particular, are living an agony. Sufferings are added to their daily misery by the terrible, endless civil war where women and children pay with their lives. The war forced many to leave their homeland to neighbouring countries or live in a remote deserted mountain in the outskirts of Kabul, seeking shelter. Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, became a city of horror and nightmare: shelled to ruins, with men with guns stopping travellers and demanding money every few miles and tens of check-points erected in the streets.

And to compound their misery, women who disobey Taleban's teachings are sent to brutal prisons and are ill-treated.

The Afghan crisis and civil war have been going on for three years now, since Russia's withdrawal from the country after which struggle for authority began.

Afghanistan is the third country to pass into the hands of an Islamic-revivalist government in the past 17 years, after Iran and Sudan, and the Taleban's victory in Afghanistan is the first to have been achieved by straight force of arms. Many Afghan armed factions who are fully supported by the U.S. are now practising an endless fratricide.

Taleban's faction fought fiercely and managed to dominate the capital with support from Pakistan. Foreign intervention of all sorts is obvious, a conspiracy aimed at destroying Afghanistan as a peaceful country, since some countries have interest in the continuation of the war for doing their arm-selling trade while others benefit from drug-trafficking.

Some experts say billions of dollar-businesses take place in Afghanistan, while women, children and old people are paying a high price.

Regrettably, after the Taleban faction took control of the capital, they started a strange and painful policy towards people, women in particular. They claim that in accordance with Islamic law, women are prohibited from leaving their houses unless accompanied by a male relative, and for urgent needs only. Women who must leave their houses must wear veil. They are not allowed to work and a statement issued by the Taleban said: Women are fully paid without being at work.

Even more painful of a decision by the Taleban was the closure of schools for women, which means denying their right to education and work. Television and playing music in public are banned, soccer players are not allowed to wear shorts. And since taking Kabul, the Talebans have declared that all government employees must grow a full beard within six weeks, and that anybody who does not pray five times a day is an infidel.

Clearly, Taleban are violating human rights in all their aspects.

The unacknowledged, but more painful part of the picture, is the continued erosion of the Islamic model of a society. The Western press have used events in Afghanistan, showing, for example, images of girls wearing Islamic clothing even inside their houses, which could be intended to erroneously reflect Islamic teachings.

In Jordan, we seldom hear voices defending the rights of Afghanis. Liberating them from the Talebans is a human rights issue. I believe we should support the Afghan women's right to education, work, freedom and democracy. For the sake of humanity, we should support and show solidarity to the Afghanis.

Ziad Salam,  
Amman 11124.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

مكتبة الصحافة



## Palestinians hold out for Israeli pullout schedule

(Continued from page 1)

living in Hebron.

The Israeli prime minister has warned the Palestinians not to expect any softening of his positions in the last-minute rush to reach an accord, officials close to the talks said.

Seven out of Mr. Netanyahu's 18 cabinet ministers have already said they are against the Hebron accord.

An eighth, Justice Minister Tzvi Hanegbi, voiced criticism of the accord on Thursday.

Two ministers from the ultra-orthodox has party also have voiced doubt about the Hebron agreement and have indicated that they would abstain from voting, government sources said on Friday.

In theory, Mr. Netanyahu could be left with a minority government, but this is unlikely since he could form a new cabinet and has already warned he would seek a coalition with the opposition Labour party if he did not get support within his own ranks.

The number of deputies in the Israeli parliament, or Knesset, opposed to a Hebron agreement are a small minority, but they have a large influence in the cabinet.

Labour, which is the largest single party in parliament, has said it would vote in favor of a Hebron agreement.

Popular support for an agreement is strong, with a poll published Friday showing that 55 per cent of Israeli Jews support an Israeli troop pullback from Hebron, compared to 27 per cent who are against it.

Arab Israelis, who account for nearly 20 per cent of Israel's population, were overwhelmingly in favour of a withdrawal from Hebron.

The poll was carried out on Wednesday.

In a poll conducted in May, shortly after Israel's general elections, 48 per cent of those surveyed opposed an Israeli withdrawal from Hebron while 41 per cent supported it. The polls of 500 persons each were conducted by the

Gallup Institute and had a margin of error of four per cent.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak spoke on the telephone with Mr. Arafat Friday about the status of negotiations on Hebron, the MENA news agency said.

In a television interview earlier, Mr. Mubarak said Israel was refusing to set a date for the final withdrawal of its troops from the rural zones of the West Bank under the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

"Two important points are still to be resolved (in order to conclude a Hebron accord) — the Palestinian presence at the (Ibrahimi Mosque) and the redeployment in the rest of the West Bank," Mr. Mubarak said.

"The Israelis ... are refusing to define a date for the end of this redeployment which according to the signed

accords should have started on Sept. 7, 1996 and finish in September 1997," he said.

"That gives the impression to the Palestinians and to the Arab World that the Israelis don't want to go beyond Hebron."

Meanwhile, two Egyptians in Gaza helping the Palestinians with the drafting of a Hebron agreement have met Mr. Arafat three times to discuss the final obstacles blocking the accord, the government newspaper Al Ahram said Friday.

The two are Nabil Fahmy, political adviser to Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, and Mufid Shehab, a professor of International Law at the University of Cairo.

The delegation also met with the European Union's Middle East envoy Michel Angel Moratinos, the newspaper said.

## Syria: Israel behind blast

(Continued from page 1)

Syria and any place," the Israeli cabinet said in a statement released after its weekly meeting.

The prime minister (Netanyahu) said that the accusations published in Damascus accusing Israel of responsibility for terrorist attacks in Syria are an outright lie. We have no connection to the terrorist attack in Syria and Syria knows it," the statement said.

U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters in Washington: "It is a very serious charge for one state to accuse another of actually sponsoring bombings in its capital."

"If the Syrian government and the Syrian press cannot

back up what they are saying, well they ought not to make that charge. It's a wild and irresponsible charge if in fact it is not backed up by evidence," he added.

Since right-winger Netanyahu was elected last May relations with Arab states have soured because of his rejection of the previously agreed land-for-peace principle.

Columnist Fouad Mardoud said in the official English-language Syria Times this week: "The big story of the passing year was the current deep recess of the Middle East peace process created by the Israeli government of Netanyahu which was the product of that dark year."

Israel's previous government broke off talks with

Syria last March after a spate of suicide bombings by militants.

Tensions between Syria and Israel rose in September when Syria redeployed 12,000 of its 35,000 troops in Lebanon to within striking distance of the Golan Heights. The Syrian move caused war jitters in Israel but Damascus described the redeployment as a defensive move.

Last month there were one or two attacks on Syrian targets in Lebanon. Leaflets distributed in Beirut last month condemned Syria's military presence in Lebanon and criticised Lebanon's pro-Syrian government.

Lebanese and Syrian officials also blamed those events on Israeli agents.

Beirut's security forces arrested dozens of members of the Christian community after the incidents but most detainees have been freed.

The Syrian official said the bus which was bombed used to travel on a route linking the north Syrian city of Aleppo with Beirut but it changed its route on New Year's eve to Damascus-Aleppo.

Diplomats said that revealing that the bus used to travel to Lebanon was a hint that the incident was connected to recent attacks against Syrian targets in Lebanon.

Earlier a Beirut-based businessman who has just returned from a trip to Damascus told Reuters in Nicosia, that at least 15 people were killed and 50 wounded in the explosion.

## Experts working on Iraq-Jordan oil deal

(Continued from page 1)

(bpd) of crude and 20,000 to 25,000 bpd of fuel oil to the Kingdom's only refinery at Zarqa.

The Iraqi oil exports to Jordan are exempt from the United Nations economic sanctions imposed on Iraq following the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Under a special arrangement worked out between the two countries, Jordan sends food and medicine to Iraq in settlement of the oil bill. However, the actual Jordanian supplies to Iraq were higher than the oil bill over the past five years and Baghdad now owes Amman about \$1.3 billion, representing debts accumulated during the 80s as well as the unsettled payment of part of the Jordanian exports to Iraq since then.

In 1996, Jordan, citing the mounting Iraqi debts, cut the annual trade protocol by about half to \$220 million.

Officials here have said that the amount is unlikely to be increased for 1997.

Dr. Dabbas and Mr. Awad said in Baghdad last week that Jordanian private sector companies had secured Iraqi export orders worth \$120 million under the oil-for-food agreement signed by Baghdad and the United Nations.

Those orders, as well as direct business done by Jordanian exporters and Iraqi importers, are not covered under the trade protocol.

Expected to have been discussed during the talks of Dr. Dabbas and Mr. Awad in Baghdad were also issues related to the outstanding Iraqi debts to Jordan and a proposed 500-kilometre pipeline to pump Iraqi oil to Zarqa and replace the present trucking system.

The project is very much alive, Dr. Dabbas said in Baghdad last week after talks with his Iraqi counterpart Amer Rasheed.

## Jordan stresses need for more commitment to Middle East peace

(Continued from page 1)

would like to talk with all colours of the Israeli political spectrum," Dr. Muasher said. "Our relations are not limited to the Labour party," he said. "We have already established good ties with all Israeli political parties regardless of whether they are in power or otherwise."

According to the information minister, Jordan "no longer views the struggle as between Arabs and Israelis but between those who support peace and those who stand against peace."

Asked whether prospects for a Likud-Labour coalition government came up during the talks with Mr. Beilin, Dr. Muasher said: "What matters to us in Jordan is advancing the peace process. It is not a Jordanian concern whether it is a national unity government in Israel" or a government led by any party.

"We are for any government that supports the peace process and works for peace," he added.

After two hours of talks with Mr. Beilin, Mr. Beilin told reporters the discussion focused on Israel's overdue withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron and a permanent peace between the Palestinians and Israelis.

"We are cautiously opti-

mistic about the future, believing that eventually we will have an agreement on Hebron and go further to have a permanent solution and strengthen the very good relations between Jordan and Israel," he said.

Dr. Muasher said the talks with Mr. Beilin were "very fruitful" because they focused "on the next steps needed to sign an agreement on Hebron fast and to move to implementing the other agreements." Meanwhile, an all-party delegation representing the Knesset's Economic Committee was also received by the Crown Prince, who denounced Wednesday's attack by an Israeli soldier against unarmed civilians in Hebron.

The Crown Prince called for economic cooperation among Jordan, the Palestinians and Israel, Petra said.

The main focus of the Israeli delegation's talks here was economic ties between Jordan and the Jewish state. The team also met with senior officials of the Investment Promotion Corporation.

The delegation expressed readiness to whatever possible to increase Jordanian exports to Israel and remove all barriers in trade ties between the two countries.

## Peru crisis continues

(Continued from page 1)

remaining hostages. "A massacre would not be favourable to the government," Mr. Rospigliosi added, noting that President Alberto Fujimori's brother, Pedro Fujimori, also was being held.

President Fujimori, who has vowed not to use force against the residence compound to end the tense standoff, appeared caught between a rock and a hard place.

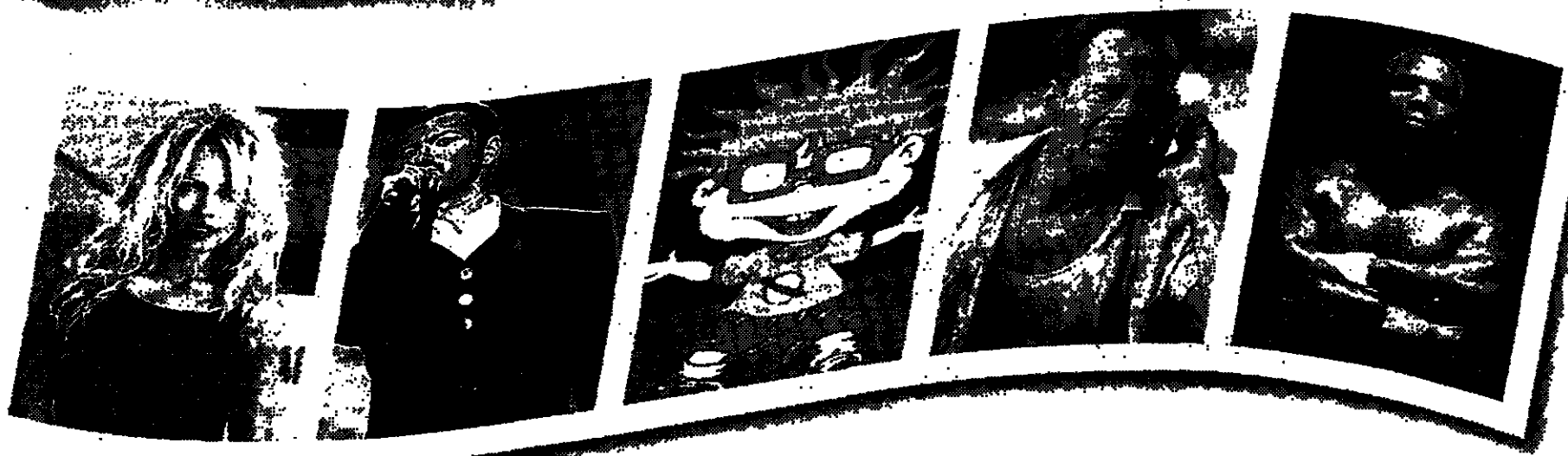
Japan, a key source of aid to Peru, has pressed for the lives of the hostages to be kept the top priority.

But, Mr. Rospigliosi said,

Peru's military is pressuring Mr. Fujimori in the other direction.

"The military doesn't take into consideration the international aspects of this (the hostage crisis)," he said. "They just don't want the rebels to get away with it." Other analysts have said the rebels with the leftist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) — packing grenade launchers and anti-tank missiles in their arsenal — know any violence against the remaining hostages could mean brutal reprisals for their jailed comrades whose release they are demanding.

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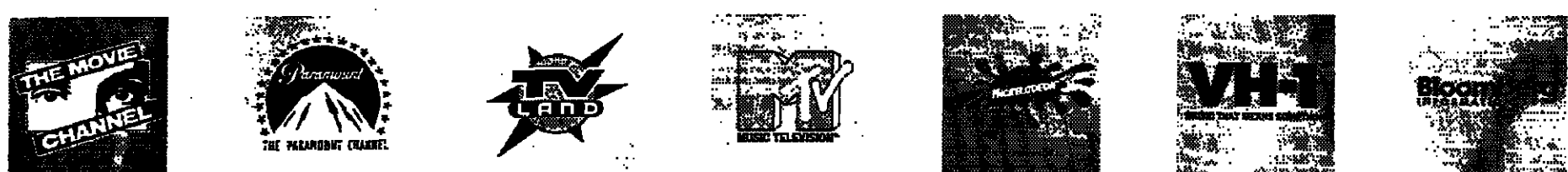


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# World economy in 1997: Too much of a good thing?

WASHINGTON (R) — The world's economic expansion is expected to gather pace this year, analysts say, provided rich countries do not take the wind out of it by trying to do too much of a good thing.

With the United States, Japan and Europe all seeking to slash government budget deficits in 1997, some analysts fear that the global upswing could falter under the weight of the policymakers' good intentions.

While budget cuts are generally good for the economy in the long run because they free resources for use by the productive private sector, they can drag down growth in the short term as govern-

ment spending is cut and taxes are raised. "We may have a synchronised fiscal contraction that leads to a cumulative global economic weakening," said Fred Bergsten, director of the Institute for International Economics think tank.

That is not the consensus forecast for this year. Most analysts see global growth speeding up in 1997, as Europe shakes off last year's doldrums, Japan's economy recovers further and the United States slows down slightly.

The base case is for sort of middling growth, steady as she goes," said William Cline, deputy managing director of the Institute of

International Finance, an advocacy group which represents banks and other financial market participants.

In its latest forecast, the International Monetary Fund predicted that world output will expand by 4.1 per cent this year. That would come on the heels of 3.8 per cent growth last year and would be the best performance since 1988.

Robert Hormats, vice chairman of Wall Street broker Goldman Sachs International, said the world economy has a lot going for it — inflation is moderate, markets are more open and budget policy more sensible. But, like Mr. Bergsten, he

worries that tight-fisted governments may be placing too much of a burden on monetary policy — lower interest rates — to generate growth in 1997.

Perhaps the biggest focus of concern is Europe, where countries are striving to cut deficits to meet tough criteria for participation in the 1999 launch of European monetary union (EMU) at a time when their economies are struggling.

"One of the biggest risks to the global growth scenario is Europe," said John Praveen, senior international economist at Wall Street broker Merrill Lynch.

With unemployment in many European countries at

or near record highs, consumers are unlikely to go on a buying binge, no matter how low interest rates are. And that in turn will make companies loth to spend more to add to capacity.

If growth does not pick up as expected in Europe, that would push up government spending on unemployment and other benefits and depress tax revenues. That in turn would force governments to tighten budgets further if they want to join EMU, aggravating the slowdown in a downward spiral.

Global investors are counting on the successful launch of the European single currency in 1999 and have placed bets accordingly. "If

that doesn't happen, you could get almost a nuclear explosion in Europe," Mr. Hormats said, with interest rates in many countries rising and turmoil in currency markets.

Mr. Bergsten also sees reasons to be concerned about the economic outlook for Japan. "I'm very sceptical about any significant pick-up in Japan," he said. "It's conceivable to me that Japan could drop into a new recession."

Japan's recovery last year has been fuelled by stepped-up government spending. But fiscal policy is expected to turn restrictive this year, as policymakers raise taxes and rein in spending to trim

Tokyo's bloated budget. That in turn would put more of an onus on the U.S. economy to maintain the global upswing this year.

James Griffin, vice president of Connecticut-based Aetna Investment Management, voiced concern that other countries were looking too much to America for growth by deliberately trying to depreciate their currencies against the dollar.

Mr. Cline pointed to another potential source of concern for the United States — the high-flying stock market that some analysts fear is setting itself up for a crash that could sap confidence and cripple the economy.

## HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SATURDAY JANUARY 4, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) This is an ideal day to study every part of your big dream and go after it with certainty. Use care in driving later tonight and while on the road make sure you are careful and don't get into any difficulties.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) You can improve home conditions easily today and make the atmosphere there pleasant for your loved ones and maintain harmony. Later this evening you can meet with fellow associates and get the advice from a bigwig.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Get into the business world early today and handle whatever is important to you. Contact good friends later this evening and plan some recreational activities which will be appreciated by everyone present.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (Moon 22 to July 21) Get busy arranging financial and other practical affairs today which must be tackled for you to become quite successful. Make an appointment early this evening so that you aren't too tired to handle any business decisions.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) If you do not bring up money interests today, you can have a happy time with the one you love and show some affection for him or her. Later this evening will be a good time to make your career activities successful.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Be with congenial whose goals and interests at this time are quite similar to your own. Enjoy your social life later this evening with your mate and make this time romantic and quite special for him or her.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Public business matters should work out smoothly today, so don't permit a secret concern to spoil things. Later this evening make every effort to seek out the assistance of knowledgeable people for suggestions concerning a project.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) Be on the alert today for any new career outlets which could open up to you. Build up your prestige and don't make any radical changes at this time or there could be a difficult situation occurring which is detrimental.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) You get fine ideas today and you should put them into operation so that you can gain from their success. Don't permit pressure to deter you from accomplishing your career objectives and making yourself quite successful.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Take on that new enterprise today which seems too big for you and you can gain the respect and admiration of those in authority. Forget that outside desire at this time so that you can concentrate upon those projects closer to home.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) You can contact outside allies today and get good results, provided you do not forget to pay your dues and make every effort to improve your situation. Later this evening go out with the town with your close friends.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) You know exactly how to improve your interests on your career activities and thereby make your assignments more profitable and have them get recognition from a bigwig. Later this evening you can relax with your mate.

**Birthstone of January:** Garnet — Rose Quartz.

## Israeli budget not seen lifting economy in 1997

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won a bruising battle with parliament to cut this year's budget, but economists, investors and business executives say they are not convinced it can revive the flagging economy.

"I see this budget more like a muddling through. There's no real message of reform, such as closing redundant offices. It's all general budget cutting," said Jonathan Katz, chief economist for Solid Finance Markets.

Analysts and business executives said they were disappointed with the extent of tax rises and other revenue-raising measures, which took the place of genuine budget cuts.

"In my opinion, the mix of higher taxes and lower spending cuts didn't help — it was not as good as expected — but the reductions are still big," said Gidi Halpern of Meitav Investments and Securities. "The people we're in touch with in the treasury are very optimistic."

Israel's parliament on Wednesday approved a budget for 1997 just under 190 billion shekels (\$58.5 billion), including about seven billion shekels in spending cuts, higher taxes and higher fees. The treasury says cuts make up about 4.7 billion shekels of the total.

In parliament, the budget met strong opposition, which led the treasury to back down on plans to cut

child allowances and impose fees for doctors' visits.

Instead, taxes on petrol and cigarettes were raised, and income tax brackets will not be adjusted for inflation, a measure that will effectively raise tax rates.

Analysts doubt that higher taxes will hurt Mr. Netanyahu politically. But, they say, if he fails to deliver on his vows to undertake wide-ranging privatisation and liberalisation measures, confidence in his economic policy will suffer.

"Other than rhetoric, we've seen very little," said Mr. Katz. "If by the end of the first quarter, we don't see big sales of government companies, people will assume you can't count on them to do anything."

But for now, the big question for Israeli business is whether the cuts will be enough to move the Bank of Israel to lower short-term interest rates and bring about a depreciation of the shekel.

In Israel's export-driven economy, a depreciation is widely seen as the means of sparking economic growth. Gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowed to an estimated 4.4 per cent in 1996 and is expected to slow to four per cent this year.

"If the budget helps undo the two-and-a-half-year freeze in the exchange rate and preserve a narrow differential between the dollar and Israeli inflation rate, then the situation will

improve," said Shaul Ashkenazi, managing director of Plasson Plastic Products.

Exports account for 85 per cent of Plasson's sales, but with a 4.2 per cent nominal drop in the Deutschmark last year, profitability dropped sharply. Mr. Ashkenazi estimates he lost \$6 million to \$7 million in contracts because he was not price competitive.

But analysts are divided about whether a real interest rate cut is in the works.

"With this budget it is hard to see a reduction of interest rates, and without that the exchange rate situation will not improve," Michael Strauss, chairman of Strauss Dairies, one of Israel's biggest food companies.

"Whoever thinks there will be a real cut in interest rates is dreaming," said Mr. Halpern.

He forecasts a reduction of a quarter to half a percentage point later this month from the current 14.7 per cent, but like other analysts he sees this and future reductions as simply tracking a fall in inflation.

The political situation is shaping up to be as big a factor for the economy this year as interest and exchange rates.

"There is no doubt that the peace process has a direct effect on investment in the economy," said Dov Tadmor, managing director of Discount Investment Corp., a leading holding company.

He said that the threat of continued unrest in the region was a growing concern of foreign investors. "Foreign investment, except in high technology, will decline this year, or certainly won't grow."

Mr. Tadmor said Finance Minister Dan Meridor's promise that the economy would return to fast-track growth in 1998 could be realised. "It's a reasonable range, but it will be contingent on the peace process," he said.

Meanwhile, official figures have showed that Israel's economy grew by 4.4 per cent in real terms in 1996, a rate of growth that was higher than expected but down from previous years.

Israel's economy grew by 7.1 per cent in 1995 and 6.4 per cent in 1994.

The Central Statistics Bureau said the number of jobless fell to 6.5 per cent of the active population last year from 7.0 per cent in 1995 while the trade deficit rose to a record \$10.7 billion from \$9.8 billion in 1995.

The balance of payments deficit for 1996 was put at 4.6 billion or 4.8 per cent of GDP.

At the start of 1996, the finance ministry predicted that GDP would rise 5.5 per cent in 1996.

Economic growth has slowed, since Benjamin Netanyahu took over as Israel's prime minister in June, however, in part because of a slowdown in foreign investment resulting from the deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

## Qadhafi orders shake-up of Libya's economic system

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi has called for a shake-up in the country's strictly-controlled economy, including a flexible rate of exchange for the overvalued dinar, freer trade and some privatisation.

He also urged a continued crackdown on corruption and improvements in the military in a wide-ranging televised speech to members of the grassroots people's committees.

"The official rate of exchange of the dinar should change according to the evaluation of the central bank, which may decide not to keep it at \$3.2 when on the black market \$1 is worth three dinars," Colonel Qadhafi said.

International sanctions imposed against Libya since 1992 for its alleged support of terrorism have eroded the purchasing power of ordinary Libyans and the value of the dinar against other currencies.

But Colonel Qadhafi said that since 1995 Libya had succeeded in amassing \$4 billion which would be "invested in profitable sectors." He recalled the policy of distributing oil dividends to the people, whereby 100,000 families so far had each received \$5,000.

He backed the award of contracts to private companies for erecting and maintaining public buildings, as well as managing services like water distribution and sewerage.

Attacking corruption and inflation, Colonel Qadhafi called on the grass roots com-

mittees to define those who would be authorised to import consumer goods and obtained the necessary currency from the central bank.

"Only cooperatives and retail traders may sell imported goods, with a limited margin of profit," the Libyan leader said, adding that measures must be taken to prevent imported subsidised goods being sold on the black market.

Retail traders would be restricted to the sale of tobacco, dairy products and clothing, he said. "Everything sold outside authorised stores should be seized and their possessors tried and imprisoned," Colonel Qadhafi added.

But he suggested liberalising the laws on importing tobacco to prevent smuggling and create revenue for the state.

"Purification committees" tasked with fighting corruption "should continue their mission, despite their mistakes and excesses," he said, citing examples of public officials who had accumulated colossal fortunes and tax frauds amounting to millions of dinars.

The Libyan leader supported an idea to raise the length of military service to two years, while giving recruits higher pay and greater social benefits, in order to increase the strength of the army and security services. Finally, he strongly rejected proposals aimed at allowing polygamy and making divorce subject to a court decision, calling them a threat to the freedom of women.

## Kuwait starts to rebuild drained reserves

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Kuwait has just started rebuilding its overseas assets after they fell by billions of dollars to pay for the 1991 Gulf war and its aftermath, the head of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has said.

Higher-than-expected oil prices, privatisation revenues and completion of repayments on a \$5.5 billion sovereign loan have all boosted income that can be channelled into rebuilding assets, said Ali Rashid Al Bader, managing director of KIA, the state's fund manager.

"So the KIA will be able, for the first time in many years, to increase the investments in its reserves for future generations," Mr. Bader told a conference reviewing the government's privatisation programme.

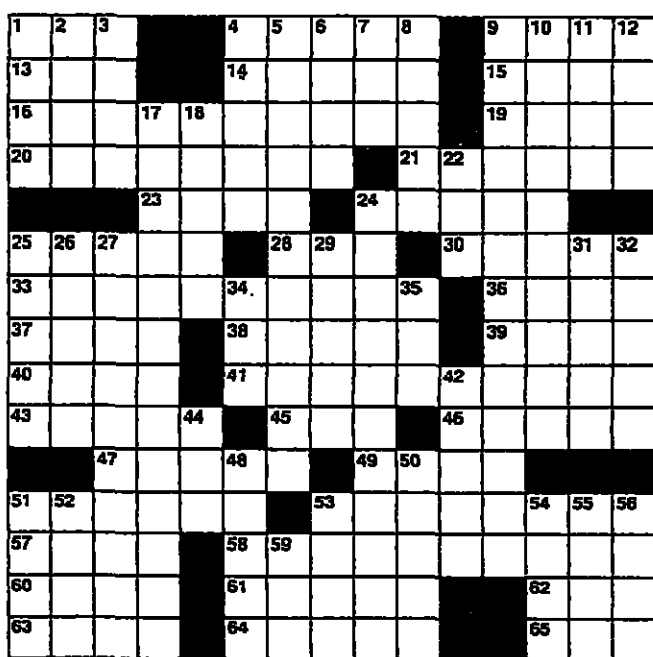
Mr. Bader said the programme of government sell-offs had raised some 650 million dinars (\$2.2 billion) since it began in earnest in mid-1994.

"We are making money now," Mr. Bader told reporters after his speech, adding that this began only "late." He said some of the income was coming from the country's still substantial foreign holdings.

He would not say how much new money was being channelled into the government's reserve funds or at what level those reserves now stand, which is a state secret.

## THE Daily Crossword

**ACROSS**  
1 Inspect  
4 All lit up  
9 Mil. VIPs  
13 — Palmas  
14 Dressed like a judge  
15 Implement  
16 Certain restaurants  
19 Ripped  
20 Schooled  
21 Overacted  
23 Some bills  
24 Choice finds  
25 — Institute (NY school)  
28 Van Gogh's loss  
30 Devil  
32 Steinbeck novel  
36 Memo  
37 Plate  
38 Foreigner to Honolulu  
39 Shroyer of TV  
40 Voyaging  
41 Shortened form  
43 Subsidiary proposition  
45 Tennis term  
46 Church parts  
47 Nonsense  
49 Needle case  
51 American journalist, Bly  
53 Certain auto contest  
57 Smell — (be suspicious)  
58 Actress in "Occasional Wife"  
60 Half a city?  
61 —  
62 "Entertainment" start of cycle or term  
63 English gun  
64 S. Launder  
65 Secluded room



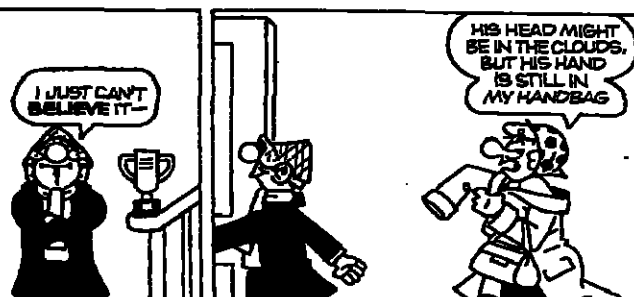
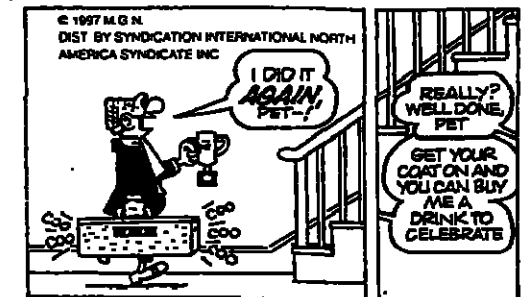
by Vivian O. Collins

**DOWN**  
1 European river  
2 Playground  
3 Jacob's brother  
4 Rugged mountain ridge  
5 Predictable  
6 Footnote abbr.  
7 Ruff's mate  
8 Ford's blunder?  
9 Turkey, once  
10 Certain masonry items  
11 Goller's cry  
12 Iditarod race requirement  
17 Noted ice skater  
18 — Domingo  
22 Sch. subj.  
24 Lacking written records  
25 Foot lever  
26 Employee's hope  
27 Aggregation  
29 Worship  
31 In accord  
32 Oriole hangouts  
34 Govt. gp.  
35 Actor Beatty  
42 Appraise  
44 Son-in-law of Muhammad  
48 Beau —  
50 Piece of armor  
51 Cat followers  
52 Q.E.D. word  
53 Mild oath  
54 Matured  
55 Balman's costume  
56 Ireland  
59 Ochs' partner

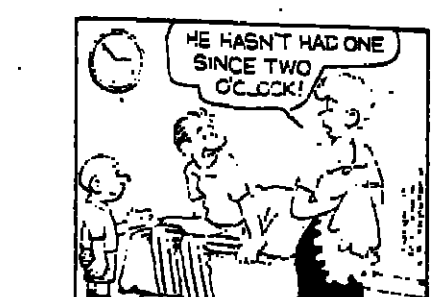
## Peanuts



## Andy Capp



## Mutt'n'Jeff



Business  
Jordan earns  
from phosp  
exports in

Jordan Phosphates  
has earned over \$500 million  
from its exports in 1996.  
The company's exports of  
phosphate fertilizers and  
chemicals to various countries  
increased significantly.  
Mr. Madani, the company's  
managing director, said that  
the company's production  
capacity has been expanded  
to meet the growing demand  
for phosphate products.  
He also mentioned that the  
company is planning to invest  
in new technologies to improve  
its production efficiency.

Jordan Telecommunications  
Company replaces  
the old system with a new  
one. The company has  
successfully completed the  
transition, ensuring that  
all services are uninterrupted.  
The new system offers  
improved performance and  
reduced maintenance costs.  
Mr. Madani expressed his  
satisfaction with the project  
and thanked the technical  
staff for their hard work.

Dan finds Tel-Aviv-Am  
line unprofitable  
and decides to shut it down.  
The company has conducted  
a thorough analysis and  
found that the line is not  
generating enough revenue  
to cover its operating costs.  
Mr. Madani announced the  
decision and said that the  
company will focus on its  
core profitable services.

THE BETTER HALF.  
A cartoon by David A. Coverly.  
It depicts a man looking at a  
woman in a mirror, with a  
speech bubble saying: 'THE  
BETTER HALF OF ME IS  
GONE!'

Christmas has been car  
year because somebody  
it's politically incor

JUMBLE  
Unscramble these four Jumbles  
the letter to each square, to form  
the ordinary words.  
ZACER  
EVASU  
BORBEJ  
NEDGER  
MEASUR CAN BE METEOR  
Now arrange  
form the sup  
geared by the

Print answer here: A  
Jumble: IDIOT AFIRE FALTEI  
Answer: How he felt after his first  
brances - BETTER OFF



# Jordan earns \$350m from phosphate exports in 1996

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPIC) exports rose to \$350 million in 1996 for an increase of \$30 million over 1995, JPIC's General Manager Sameh Madani said Friday.

Mr. Madani said the company exported 4,350 million tonnes of phosphates last year compared to 3,878 million tonnes in 1995.

He added that the Indo-Jordan Chemicals Company which carries \$170 million in investments will start production of phosphoric acid at Al Shidiyeh plant this year. Phosphoric acid will be shipped to India.

Mr. Madani indicated that the \$85 million Jordanian-Japanese Chemical Fertilisers Company will also start production this year and that chemical fertilisers will be exported to Japan.

On the future plans, Mr. Madani said that the company this year will increase its exports to Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

"We are carrying out feasibility studies to expand the Shidiyeh plant to increase its production to reach eight million tonnes in 1999 with a cost of \$250 million and that several countries showed their interest in financing the project," according to Mr. Madani.

# AFM ends '96 with noticeable activity

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Turnover shot up by fourfold and prices also improved at the stock market last week in an year-end scramble following announcements of major private sector deals with Iraq and ahead of performance announcement by several companies, brokers said Friday.

Contributing to the high volume was a deal worth 12.48 million dinars when a private group purchased government equity in Amman's landmark Jordan Intercontinental Hotel.

The brokers also said that the market was buoyed by reports from Baghdad that Jordan and Iraq were to renew an annual oil agreement under which the Kingdom gets all its energy needs at discounted prices. However, two ministers returned home late Thursday without signing the oil accord.

The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM), as the bourse is officially known, said turnover for the week ending Thursday was 18.9 million dinars, compared with the previous week's 3.4 million dinars.

The brokers noted that the market was open only for three days this week, two days being official holidays and no business conducted on Thursday, when accounts are finalised.

The report said 4.8 million shares changed hands under 2,357 contracts concluded during the week, with daily average trading during the week at 6.3 million dinars compared with 700,000 dinars.

The official AFM share price index based on 60 major companies closed at 153.46 points, up 2.3 points or 1.52 per cent, from the week's opening of 151.16, the report said.

The service sector, in which the hotel deal was included, accounted for 13.25 million dinars of the weekly turnover, followed by banks and financial institutions with 3.4 million dinars, industrials with 2.22 million dinars and insurance firms with 53,400 dinars.

Sectoral indices showed that insurance stocks gained 2.29 per cent during the week, services sector went up by 2.22 per cent, banks and financial institutions gained 1.89 per cent and industrials rose by 0.89 per cent.

The AFM report said stocks of 90 companies were involved in the week's business, with 44 closing with gains, 35 losing and 11 remaining unchanged.

Walid Shair, director-general of the AFM, meanwhile, reported an increase in non-Jordanian trading in the market, accounting for more than one-third of the business during November.

He said non-Jordanian trading in the market amounted to 4.27 million dinars of November's total turnover of 15.98 million.

According to Mr. Shair, the figure for non-Jordanian trading in November represented a 12 per cent increase over the previous month.

# Egypt's stock market hits \$3.2 billion in 1996

CAIRO (AFP) — The total value of transactions on Egypt's budding stock market last year reached around 11 billion pounds (\$3,264 billion), the chairman of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) said.

Abdul Hamid Ibrahim told a press conference that the total volume of transactions peaked in December to reach 1,827 billion pounds (\$539 million), the highest for a single month in 1996.

A total of 207.8 million shares traded hands in 1996 compared to 72.2 million in 1995, he said.

"The total number of operations in 1996 stood at 2.3 million which is four times as many operations as those concluded during the past 11 years," Mr. Ibrahim said.

He said that the market value for 1996 was worth 48 billion pounds (\$14,159 billion) while the total volume of stock issued stood at 20.6 billion pounds (\$6,77 billion), Mr. Ibrahim said.

He noted that a total of 248.8 million stocks were issued last year while at the same time 42 private firms were transformed into stock ventures.

"The message is clear. Limited and private firms are history," Mr. Ibrahim said, noting that more and more businessmen are keen on joining the stock market to attract more funds to finance their projects.

Among the government's plans for 1997 is a bid to issue treasury bonds worth four billion pounds (\$1.2 billion) to be floated on the bourse within a week, Mr. Ibrahim said.

Last year three billion pounds of bonds were issued.

"1996 was marked by the reorganisation and development of the capital market because this market's key responsibility is to provide medium and long-range financing to the private and public sector," Mr. Ibrahim said.

He stressed that the capital market was bolstered by Egypt's nationwide privatisation programme, first launched in 1991 and which really took off in 1996.

Egypt will also forge ahead with an ambitious programme started in 1997 to upgrade and modernise its financial markets, namely the bourse, as part of its privatisation programme, he added.

Meanwhile, the CMA announced in a statement the creation of a new type of investment funds known as direct investment funds to bolster stock market activity.

# UAE stock investors reap high profits in 1996

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Investors in United Arab Emirates (UAE) stocks reaped healthy profits in 1996 as the price of most shares increased sharply, and dealers expect another good year in 1997.

A decline in interest rates on bank deposits spurred demand for shares, sending the index to its highest level since it was set up seven years ago.

"Investors in stocks in the UAE achieved high returns in 1996 compared with the previous years," said Ziad Dabbas, director of the share-dealing department at the government-controlled National Bank of Abu Dhabi (NBAD).

"This is because of a large increase in the prices of the shares of most banks and companies trading in the market as well as distribution of profits and the grant of bonus shares to shareholders by most of those institutions," he explained.

Mr. Dabbas, in his annual report on the UAE stock market, said the NBAD-introduced share index surged by 328 points or nearly 15 per cent in 1996 after rising 11.9 per cent in 1995 but declining 4.9 per cent in 1994.

The 1,000-point index, which tracks the biggest 20 banks and companies trading their shares in the UAE, peaked at 2,481.13 on Monday, Mr. Dabbas said.

Mr. Dabbas expected a further improvement in the stock market in 1997 because of a continued economic upturn in the Gulf country, mainly in the oil, trade, construction, real estate and tourism sectors.

"Several new companies are also expected to float shares while some government institutions will be privatised. This means the market will witness another active year in 1997," he said.

Dealers said 1996 was one of the best years for the UAE share-dealing, since most banks and companies recorded higher profits.

"Demand was also strong because many investors turned to stocks after a relative decline in interest rates," said Zuhair Kaswani, another stockbroker.

Traders also cited the creation of two major companies which began trading their shares in 1996. They were the Abu Dhabi Ship-building Company, with a capital of 175 million dirhams (\$47.6 million) and the Al Khazna insurance firm, with a capital of 380 million dirhams (\$103.5 million).

Brokers said market capitalisation of the nearly 40 institutions trading their shares has exceeded 50 billion dirhams (\$13.6 billion) at the end of 1996 after hitting a record 45 billion dirhams (\$12.26 billion) at the end of 1995.

The UAE has the second biggest stock market after Saudi Arabia in terms of capitalisation. But turnover, the value of traded shares, has remained among the lowest in the region due to the absence of speculation and other factors.

According to Mr. Dabbas, shares traded in 1996 accounted for less than two per cent of the available stock because most dealers tend to keep their shares as a long-term investment and trading is restricted to nationals.

"Another factor is that a large part of the shares is owned by the government and some companies and wealthy businessmen who do not trade. This has led to a general stagnation in the market," he said.

The UAE, a major oil producer, does not have an official exchange but is planning to open a floor next year. Share-dealing is conducted by telephone through a handful of authorised brokers, who often complain about manipulation by major investors and widespread leak of information about the performance of trading institutions before they publish their results. Dealers said the opening of a formal exchange would end malpractices and woo small investors, who have been scared off by manipulation.

# Beirut bourse to open to foreigners, add listings

BEIRUT (R) — A year after it reopened, the Beirut Stock Exchange (BSE) plans to extend its comeback in 1997 by opening up to foreign investors and listing new securities.

Trading floor chief Fouad Baalbaki said the BSE would diversify and increase traded securities, open the domestic financial market to non-Lebanese investors and introduce a new trading method for continuous pricing in 1997.

"The year 1997 will mark our move to trade in corporations. It will also witness the realisation of plans made the previous year to add to the liquidity of the market and make it accessible to non-Lebanese investors," he told Reuters in an interview.

"We have achieved the first step with the listing of a bank and are looking for further trade in shares of other sectors," he added.

Mr. Baalbaki was referring to the listing of Banque Libanaise pour le Commerce (BLC) shares recently authorised by the exchange for trade on Monday, the last trading day of 1996.

BLC decided last month to offer 1,227,240 C shares on the BSE. Over three million B shares underlying global depository receipts issued by the bank will also be listed for later trading.

This will add at least \$50 million worth of stocks to the shares listed on the Beirut bourse. The capitalisation of the market is currently calculated at a little over \$2 billion.

"This significant transaction which provided the BLC with both domestic and international presence will serve as a reference for all banks wishing to list on the market," Ziad Makkawi of Beirut-based Middle East Capital Group (MECG) said.

MECG was lead manager of the domestic offering and co-manager of the international offering.

The transaction was made possible under a law passed last year allowing Lebanese banks to trade 30 per cent of their shares on the exchange without prior permission from the central bank.

Mr. Makkawi said MECG was working on several projects to list banks and companies from various industries on the exchange in 1997.

Mr. Baalbaki said four banks including Audi and Byblos and two new firms "are planning to list by the end of February." He declined to give further details.

"The banking sector has realised the need to grow through the injection of fresh capital. This will increase their ability to offer medium and long-term credit for the economy," he said.

Daily

Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

## Jordan Telecommunications Company replaces TCC

THE JORDAN Telecommunications Company has officially replaced and acquired all the assets of the former government-owned Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) from Wednesday, Jan. 1, 1997. Large ads appeared in the Arabic dailies to herald the birth of the company which is capitalised at JD250 million and is fully owned by the government although it operates on full commercial basis.

Walid Dweik, former director general of the corporation, was appointed by the Council of Ministers to the post of board chairman of the company. Afram Jamil was appointed to the post of general manager whereas Samir Maaytah was chosen to replace Hisham Qudrah as secretary general of the Ministry of Post and Communications. (Al Ra'i).

## Dan finds Tel-Aviv-Amman bus line unprofitable

ACCORDING TO Quds Press, the Israeli bus company Dan intends to halt its daily bus trip between Tel Aviv and Amman due to "the unfeasibility of this line." A spokesman for the company said Dan loses 1,000 shekels daily by operating the bus line because of "weak demand" to travel to Jordan. Noting that losses averaged 300,000 shekels annually, the spokesman said that only between 10 to 15 passengers take the bus for the Tel Aviv-Amman trip on a daily basis.

The company said that the approval of the Israeli government to raise the fare from 23 shekels to 33 shekels (\$10) from Saturday was not enough to cover the losses and that the daily bus services may be totally stopped. A spokesman for the Israeli government said that the Ministry of Transport has not received any official statement from the bus company which, under the contract, is obliged to inform the authorities of its decision six months in advance before resorting to any unilateral action (Al Dostour).

THE BETTER HALF.

By Glasbergen

GLASBERGEN

Special News Bulletin

"Christmas has been canceled this year because somebody decided it's politically incorrect."

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Anglin

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ZACER

EVASU

BORBEJ

NEDGER

The wind will be northwest at 10 MPH

He makes it look easy

MEASURING WIND CAN BE THIS FOR A METEOROLOGIST.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumbles: IDIOT AFIRE FALTER BEAVER Answer: How he felt after his first day on bucking broncos - BETTER OFF

JORDAN MARKETPLACE \*\*\* JORDAN MARKETPLACE \*\*\* JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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## South Africa to meet U.S. in final

PERTH, Australia (R) — Third seeds South Africa maintained their unbeaten run in the Hopman Cup mixed teams event with a 2-1 victory over Romania on Friday to secure a spot in the final against the United States.

World number 10 Wayne Ferreira guided South Africa in Saturday's final when he levelled the tie with a 7-6 7-6 victory over Adrian Panatta and then combined with Amanda Coetzer to win the doubles.

Romania, who needed to win the tie to stay in the eight-team tournament, were given a glimmer of

### Hopman Cup

hope when Irina Spirlea, ranked 11 in the world, beat Amanda Coetzer 5-7 6-4 6-1.

The South Africans will play Chanda Rubin and teenager Justin Gimelstob in the final.

South Africa can credit their first Hopman Cup final berth in five attempts to Switzerland's Marc Rosset, who retired when leading Ferreira 6-0 2-1 on Wednesday.

The second-seeded Swiss were then forced to default the doubles to give South Africa an unlikely 2-1 vic-

tory.

Rosset showed no signs of the back problems which forced him to concede his opening two singles ties in the tournament when he beat Germany's Bernd Karbacher in straight sets in Friday's other Group B tie.

Martina Hingis, ranked sixth in the world, recorded her third consecutive straight-sets victory in the tournament when she brushed aside Petra Begerow 6-1 6-1 in just 47 minutes.

The Swiss pair combined to win the doubles in straight sets to take the tie 3-0.

## Cycling chief says retiring Indurain no match for Mercx

PAMPLONA, Spain (AFP)

— Claude Jacquat, a senior official of cycling's world governing body UCI, said on Thursday he was sorry that five-time Tour de France winner Miguel Indurain of Spain was retiring but added that he could not be compared to the Belgian Eddy Mercx.

"It is sad because both world cycling and Spanish cycling will miss him," Jacquat, head of the UCI's technical commission, said.

"However, I cannot place him on the same level as his fellow five-time winner Mercx as Eddy wanted to win every race in the season whereas Miguel only wanted the Tour de France," Jacquat added.

Jacquat said that he felt Indurain had made an error of judgement in giving in to his Banesto team's orders and cycling in the 1996 Tour of Spain.

"He was wrong to cycle in the Tour of Spain and gave the impression of a tormented soul," Jacquat commented.

The 32-year-old's failure to make it a unique six tour wins in a row last year sparked off rumours of a possible retirement and when he failed to find a team willing to pay him \$8 million for the 1997 season his fate was sealed.

"It was a difficult decision to take. I am now going to concentrate on other things," said Indurain.

"I feel I have concentrated enough of my time on professional cycling and now I want to enjoy the sport as an amateur," he added.

Indurain said it had taken him three months to make a final decision about his future.

"It was made even more difficult by the fact that I feel in perfect physical shape and am convinced that I could win a sixth Tour de France," said the cyclist, whose contract with Banesto ended on Dec. 31.

Both Banesto and Once were keen to sign the Spaniard for this season but neither were prepared to match his multi-million

dollar demand.

Indurain's biggest success last season was to take the gold in the Olympic time-trial but he made no secret that it did not compare to winning the Tour de France.

"For any professional cyclist winning the tour is the pinnacle of their career, whereas winning the Olympic title is purely symbolic," he said.

Immediately after his retirement announcement, Jean-Marie Leblanc, director of the Tour de France, described Indurain as one of the greatest champions in the tour's history.

"He was a perfect gentleman. Always approachable, always willing to sign autographs. He was a great ambassador for the sport," said Leblanc.

Frenchman Bernard Hinault, a fellow five-time winner, added his own tribute to the Spaniard.

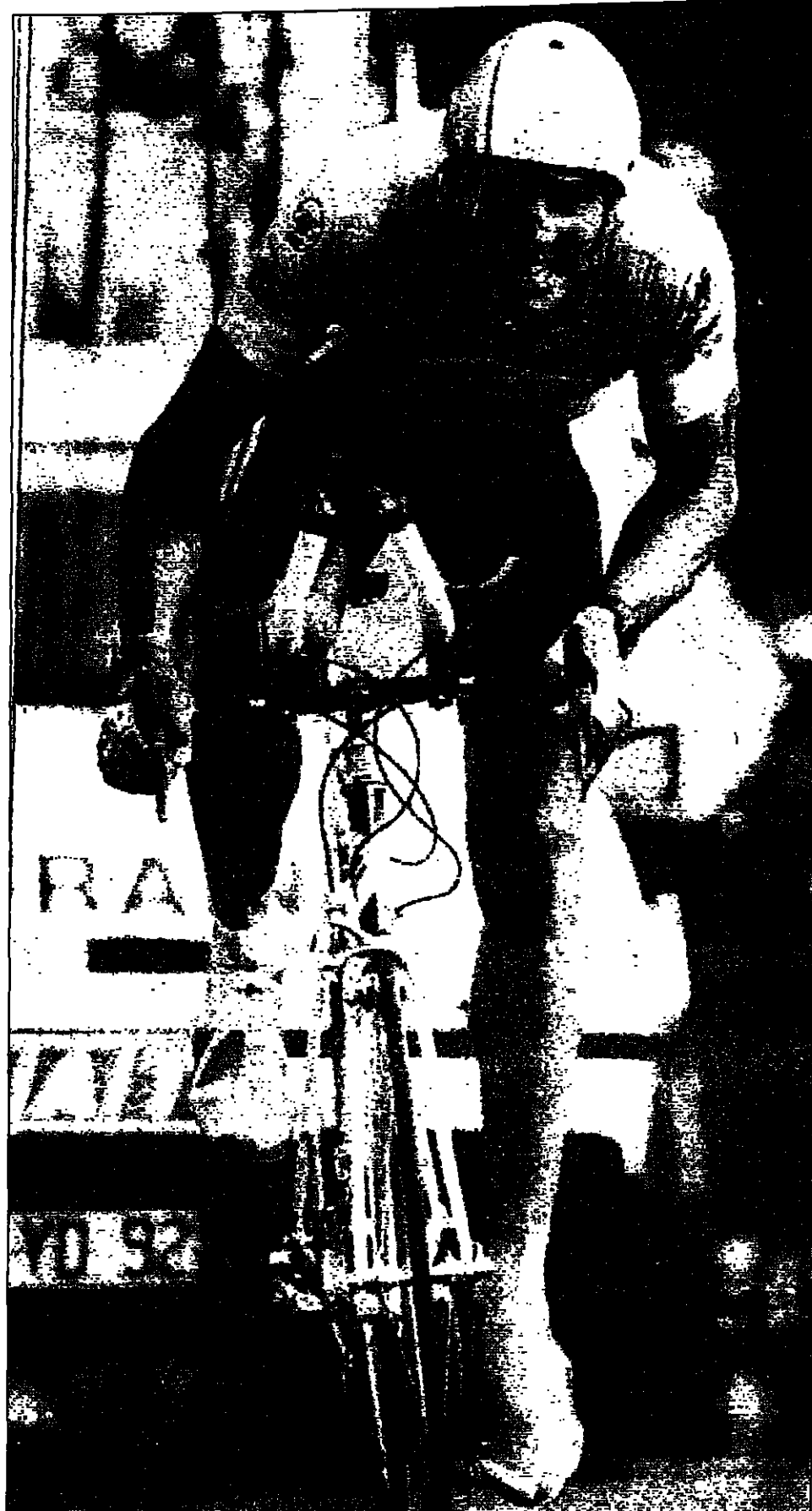
"He won his first Tour de France relatively late at the age of 27, but he just got stronger and stronger. He fixed his tactics well ahead of the race and stuck to them. For him the final standings were how he was to be judged not just one glorious stage win which could have sacrificed his whole race," Hinault, the last Frenchman to win the tour in 1983, said.

Banesto sports director Jose Miguel Echavarri was also quick to praise Indurain.

"Never has Spain had such a great champion. All of Spain is sad," said Echavarri.

Abraham Olano, the 1995 world road race champion and who is the newly signed leader of the Banesto team, said that Indurain had helped cycling become front page news.

"We have to respect Miguel's decision. I look back with fond memories on his sportsmanship which has helped make cycling one of the world's most respected sports and inevitably we the cyclists are similarly respected," Olano said.



Miguel Indurain

## Indurain, unspoiled champion

LONDON (R) — Miguel Indurain free-wheeled out of cycle racing as uncomplicated and serene as the day he first turned a pedal.

Although he has appeared to take over cycling in recent years it has never taken him over. As he once said: "I am proud of what I have done but you must keep a perspective. It's just a bicycle race after all."

The last six years of his career have centred on winning that bicycle race — the Tour de France. Five times he has obliged his devotees but last year they had to settle for a consolation — an Olympic gold rather than an unprecedented sixth tour victory.

At his dominant best the farmer's son from Villava, near Pamplona, was untouchable in races against the clock. That was how his tour triumphs were founded. But the ticking clock finally caught up with the 32-year-old from Navarre.

Indurain leaves as one of only four men who have won five Tours de France.

But last July Spain had a dream — fervently they wanted their man to stand alone with six triumphs.

By the time the race reached his home region the yellow jersey of tour leader was around the shoulders of Denmark's Bjarne Riis. Skilful stage-managing brought the tour to Pamplona for the final crucial days but Riis had already struck.

Tears filled Indurain's eyes as he stood on the Pamplona podium his arm raised by the conquering Riis — emotion was never far away from the seemingly imperturbable Spaniard that day as his fans chanted and sung his name.

Banners proclaimed "Five is enough" and "You are always the greatest." It was the fiesta of Saint Fermin where young men try to outrun the bulls in the streets of Pamplona's old town.

But Indurain was to save his final charge for Atlanta where he would become the first to win the Olympic time-trial gold.

The final dream had

come true. "I never believed that I would get a second chance at the Olympics," said the man who 12 years previously had been a wide-eyed youth at the Los Angeles Games.

He might have appeared in Los Angeles as a runner. He was after all the 400 metres champion of Navarre. But it was the hunger of a fast-growing lad that steered Indurain into cycling.

When the organiser of a race in his home town announced: "There is a sandwich and a drink for all who finish," 11-year-old Mig was hooked.

Dad had bought him a bike to ride between the farmhouse and the fields, and the lanky Indurain was soon spotted.

Once Jose Miguel Echavarri became his manager, Indurain was set for the top under the careful guidance of a man he saw as his second father.

Echavarri lived for Indurain. "He is a lord. Eddy Mercx would grind and humble his rivals but Miguel is considerate and does not rule in such a

fashion."

The result of their partnership produced respect rather than fear from their rivals.

If ever Indurain was hurting it was not apparent. But he can recall some nervous moments. He once rode 25 kilometres through the mountains with a double fracture of his wrist and remembers racing into Brussels in heavy rain, his biggest fear.

"I was riding blind. I was pure guesswork where I was going. I feared I might hit the kerb, and anyway I lose 50 per cent of my potential if it is cold or it rains."

With two kilometres to go to the finish on an Alpine climb, he confessed later: "I suddenly died and could go no further but I made it to the finish."

"Everyone tells me that I never look as if I am suffering but when I see videos of the races I always remember what I had to endure."

Because of his racing exploits Indurain has been called extra-terrestrial. But no-one in the racing pack

is more down-to-earth.

On the brink of winning his first tour he phoned his mother, Isabella — not to share the good news but to find out if the barley had been harvested.

For one who loves a simple life, he has survived 10 tours unmarked by all the hype. Streets have been named after him, a hymn of praise composed in his honour and fiestas celebrated his victories.

The fans will miss him. So too will Spanish TV. His successes sent the July ratings soaring. His departure will leave a gap in Spanish sport, where he once earned more votes than seven Ballesteros in the Sportsman of the Year poll.

Abraham Olano may be seen as a successor of sorts but Olano will remember sorely that when he beat Indurain for the 1995 World Road-Race title in Colombia, he was insulted in the streets of San Sebastian for daring to beat "the immense Miguel."

Indurain will always reign in the hearts of Spain.

## Austrian finalists in New Zealand women's classic

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Second seed Judith Wiesner and qualifier Marion Maruska won matches of differing character Friday to set up an all-Austrian final in the women's tennis tournament here.

The singles showdown Saturday in the \$107,500 event will also feature the same scenario as the final here 12 months ago.

That, too, was between the second seed and a qualifier, with American outsider Sandra Cacic upsetting another Austrian, Barbara Paulus, in three sets.

Wiesner had little trouble in overcoming the challenge of Bulgarian-born German Elena Wagner, taking their semifinal 6-2, 6-1.

The world number 15 had too much composure for an opponent ranked 77 places below her.

Wagner made more unforced errors and did not take advantage of the chances that came her way.

In particular, she squandered five break points in one game early in the second set, when she could have gone 2-0 up and put some pressure on Wiesner.

"She had some chances," Wiesner said. "But she

could not convert and I played the important points better."

Wiesner was happy with her form overall this week, but said there would be no complacency against Maruska, who is ranked just 154th.

"It will be the same situation as today," Wiesner said. "You just have to go out there and give it your best shot."

While Wiesner went the short route, Maruska and Thai teenager Tamarine Tanasugarn took nearly two hours to decide their baseline battle, which ended 3-6 6-3 6-3.

The match was marked by both players' difficulty in holding serve, while Maruska at one stage looked likely to pay for failing to grab the numerous other break chances that came her way.

Early in the third set, with the result still in the balance, Tanasugarn went into the dressing room to change into a fresh shirt.

The tactic had worked the previous day, when she turned around a losing position to end Cacic's tenure as champion.

Friday, the reverse

applied. Tanasugarn tired visibly during the remainder of the encounter, dropping the next five games and the match.

The result put the 24-year-old Maruska, who has had two long periods out of the circuit because of serious knee injury, into her first WTA Tour final.

There was another first for her after her victory — a stranger in the stands presented her with a red carnation.

Another spectator, one she knew, handed her a book about New Zealand — she had had little chance to go sightseeing because of her unexpected run of success, she explained.

Having played seven games on the pro, Maruska said her body was holding up well and winning helped to ease any aches and pains.

Wiesner and Maruska have not faced one another before in a tournament.

Their only meeting, Maruska remembered, was about six years ago in an Austrian league match with Wiesner winning 7-5 in the final set.

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Information







## Settlers temporarily leave W. Bank hill

Israel promises settlers negotiations on construction on land near Ramallah

BEIT AL, West Bank (Agencies) — More than 200 Jewish settlers who had set up mobile homes on a hillside near here in an attempt to extend their settlement on the West Bank temporarily evacuated the area on Friday.

Their action had prompted strong Palestinian protests as talks dragged on over the long-delayed Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron.

Settler leaders said the mobile homes that they installed at night would be removed on Sunday and in return the defence ministry promised that negotiations would begin on construction on the land.

A settlers' spokesman said Friday that following an attack by Palestinians on a Beit Al family three weeks ago in which two settlers died, they had received government approval to use the land to extend Beit Al, near Ramallah north of Jerusalem.

In Gaza City, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's spokesman Nabil Abu Rdaina "demanded that the government immediately remove the settlers, whose action seriously threatens the peace process."

Negotiations have stalled over Israel's long-delayed troop withdrawal from Hebron and turning 80 per cent of the West Bank city over to Palestinian control, despite intense U.S. mediation.

Mr. Rdaina denounced the "fait accompli" that the settlers wanted to impose on the West Bank.

Five families of settlers moved into seven mobile

homes erected on the hillside and dozens of other settlers announced plans to set up mobile homes on a hillside near here in an attempt to extend their settlement on the West Bank temporarily evacuated the area on Friday.

The Israeli army sent reinforcements to the area for a possible forcible removal of the settlers and declared the area a "closed military zone," barring access to the press.

General Gaby Ofir, commander of Israeli forces in the West Bank, inspected the area but made no comments.

Israel's left-wing opposition called for the immediate removal of the settlers and described their move as an attempt to derail a bid to reach an agreement on a handover of Hebron to Palestinian rule.

Two right-wing deputies, Moshe Peled, deputy education minister, and Benny Elon, a hardline nationalist, arrived at the scene to show their support for settlers.

Nine members of the National Religious Party also threw their support behind the settlers.

Meanwhile, the Israel municipality of Jerusalem released \$80,000 to finance a feasibility study on building new Jewish settlements in Arab East Jerusalem.

The planned 250 homes would be located on an 8.2-hectare piece of land, most of which would be in East Jerusalem and the rest in the town of Abu Dis, in the eastern suburb of the city, the weekly Jerusalem newspaper Kol Hain reported.

Israel's right-wing government has been pushing the expansion of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, angering Palestinians and complicat-

ing peace negotiations.

Mr. Arafat aide Ahmad Tibi termed the settlers' move near Ramallah "a serious threat to the peace process" and called on Israel to evacuate them.

"If the Israeli government moves against the settlers then it would be responding to the needs of the peace process," he told Reuters. "If not, then we would understand that this government is condoning the settlers' action and we do not want to think of this scenario."

Palestinian officials pointed out the new settlement near Ramallah was in one of the rural areas Israel was supposed to evacuate in the next stages of the accord.

Palestinian farmers say they own the hill land where the settlers want to build a new settlement. In an earlier dispute over the hill, a Palestinian demonstrator was shot dead by settlers.

Settlers said they will name the new settlement after Ita and Efraim Tzur, a mother and son from Beit Al who were killed in a drive-by shooting by Palestinian militants last month.

After the shooting, settlers had demanded that Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approve the construction of 1,500 new homes near Beit Al, but the prime minister declined, apparently fearing this would endanger the delicate negotiations with the Palestinians.

Dozens of Israeli police officers were deployed on Artis hill on Friday, but did not prevent settlers from reaching the site.



Jewish women settlers clean the floor inside one of seven mobile homes set up early Thursday on a hilltop outside the Beit Al settlement near Ramallah as other settlers stand outside. The homes were removed later in the day (Reuters photo)

## U.S. presses for Hebron agreement, and warns of fresh extremist threats

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The United States on Thursday pressed Israel and Palestinians to complete a deal on Hebron saying protracted negotiations were fuelling instability and the potential for increased terrorist activity in the Middle East.

After a telephone conversation with U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross, who is mediating the talks, state department spokesman Nicholas Burns said:

"This agreement is not yet finished ... and it's our view...that it's really up to the Israel and the Palestinians to finish this deal."

"They have the capacity to make this deal. It's up to them to do it. They are the only ones who can," Mr. Burns said. He called the deal, which was supposed to be completed nearly one year ago, "long overdue."

"We think that an agreement is there for the taking but they have got to make the decision. That decision has to be taken together," Mr. Burns told a news briefing.

A top aide to Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accused the Palestinian of stalling in talks on Hebron but Palestinians said Israel's refusal to set dates for future redeployments was holding up an agreement.

Mr. Burns refused to be drawn on which side might be at fault. He quoted Mr. Ross as saying both sides are negotiating in good faith.

As a deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) for Israel's redeployment in Hebron continued to elude negotiators, Israeli police held a second soldier on Thursday in connection with the shooting of seven Arabs in the West Bank city.

The first soldier arrested, Noam Friedman, caused the injuries when he sprayed rifle fire into a Hebron market on Wednesday in what he called an attempt to keep the town of 400 Israeli settlers and 100,000 Palestinians from being handed over to Palestinian rule.

Mr. Burns said he hoped the incident would not

derail the difficult Hebron negotiations, which earlier this week seemed about to be concluded successfully.

He praised Netanyahu, who quickly condemned the attack, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who discouraged Arab retaliation, for acting very responsibly.

But with tensions running high, Mr. Burns announced that the United States had received "indications of an increased likelihood of terrorist attacks over the next two weeks" in Israel, Jerusalem and the West Bank.

As a result, "we're issuing a travel advisory today on Israel, and the West Bank (warning) American citizens about the potential for terrorist actions in those areas," he said.

The advisory warns U.S. citizens "to exercise caution in public areas, to avoid travel on public buses, to avoid congregating at bus stops."

Mr. Burns said "while Americans have not been specifically targeted, Americans have been killed in the past in those areas in

terrorist incidents" and hence it is Washington's responsibility to make them aware of the new threats.

Mr. Burns said the threats were general, meaning no specific times or venues for attacks were mentioned. He refused to mention the source of the threats.

The U.S. warning was issued "because of some information that we have and ... also because the general climate (in the region) is so volatile and the terrorist shooting in Hebron yesterday is an example of that," Mr. Burns said.

He said the United States believes a Hebron deal will serve to calm tensions between Israelis and Palestinians.

President Bill Clinton on Wednesday brought his personal prestige to bear in the negotiations by calling Arafat and telling him to "get it done with."

Turning up the pressure on the sides, Mr. Burns said: "We think that an agreement is there for the taking, but they have got to make the decision that they're going to do it, and that decision has to be taken together."

## Fresh bout of violence reported in S. Lebanon

TYRE (AFP) — Two Israeli soldiers were wounded on Friday in an attack by Iranian-backed Hizbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon, security sources said.

The soldiers were wounded when their position at Sujud, on the edge of the self-declared Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon, came under automatic weapons and anti-tank rocket fire from Hizbollah fighters, the sources said.

The Voice of the South, the radio station of the Israeli-allied South Lebanon Army (SLA), confirmed the attack by the Hizbollah militia but did not mention any casualties.

Israeli warplanes staged three raids on Hizbollah positions following the attack, police said, firing missiles at the Ijlim Al Touffah Hills, and Israeli troops and Hizbollah exchanged fierce artillery fire.

There was no immediate word on casualties. Hizbollah anti-aircraft batteries opened fire on the Israeli planes but did not hit them, police said.

Two Israeli warplanes also broke the sound barrier over Beirut following Friday morning's Hizbollah attack.

Lebanon has decided to lodge a new complaint about the Israeli air raids to the international committee monitoring a ceasefire in South Lebanon, which is due to meet on Monday.

The truce brought to an end a 17-day Israeli onslaught against South Lebanon in April last year, which left around 200 people dead, mainly civilians.

The U.S.-brokered ceasefire prohibits both sides from attacking or carrying out attacks from civilian areas.

The committee, currently chaired by France, is also due to consider an earlier Lebanese complaint and three from Israel which

were lodged following various clashes last month between Israeli troops or SLA fighters and Hizbollah guerrillas.

Hizbollah said in a statement on Friday that 47 of its fighters had been killed in the Israeli occupied zone in 1996, when it said it carried out some 765 attacks.

It also claimed that 45 Israelis, including one civilian, were killed during Hizbollah attacks, and another 211 were injured.

Another 34 SLA members were killed and 70 wounded in attacks by Hizbollah's armed wing, the Islamic Resistance Movement, it said.

However, the Israeli army claims to have lost only 28 soldiers and 20 SLA militants, Hizbollah added.

### Hizbollah, SLA swap remains

Hizbollah and the SLA militia swapped on Friday the remains of two militants from two dead guerrillas. A spokesman for Hizbollah said group officials handed over the remains of two SLA fighters it holds to officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Beirut's southern suburbs in the morning.

In exchange, the militant group received from ICRC delegates the remains of two Hizbollah guerrillas held by the SLA, at a checkpoint linking Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone to the rest of the region, the spokesman added.

In July, Hizbollah and Israel exchanged the remains of two Israeli soldiers held by the fundamentalists for a decade for the bodies of 123 guerrillas. The German-brokered deal also secured the release of 45 captives by the SLA and the return of 17 SLA militants held captive by Hizbollah

## Saddam reportedly wooing Talabani

CAIRO (AP) — President Saddam Hussein is trying to mend fences with a second Kurdish leader before the opening of a new U.S.-sponsored meeting to reconcile warring Kurds in northern Iraq, a leading Arabic newspaper said Friday.

President Saddam's move is largely seen as an attempt to regain a full hold on the region, which until recently had been a de facto Kurdish state protected by overflights by a U.S.-led allied force.

The London-based Al Hayat said President Saddam has dispatched a former Kurdish minister in his cabinet to convince Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), to open a dialogue with Baghdad.

Former minister Makram Talabani, who is a cousin of Mr. Talabani, met with the Kurdish leader a few days ago to discuss ideas for reconciliation, the newspaper said.

Such an alliance would enhance President Saddam's hold on the north since Mr. Talabani's chief rival, Massoud Barzani, already has re-established ties with the Iraqi government.

The move came a week before a meeting proposed by the United States between representatives of Mr. Talabani's group and its main rival, Mr. Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

The Kurdish-controlled area set up after the Gulf war in 1991 was weakened by feuds between Mr. Barzani and Mr. Talabani over power sharing. Last August, it deteriorated further when Mr. Barzani asked President Saddam for military help to overcome Mr. Talabani's Iranian allied forces.

## Letter bombs sent to Arabic paper in U.S.

WASHINGTON (R) — Four letter bombs disguised as Christmas cards were removed from the office of an Arabic newspaper on Thursday and law enforcement officials said the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) terrorist task force was investigating.

Two similar devices also were found at the federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, addressed to the parole officer, the FBI said. The agency cautioned people to be alert for similar cards.

The first of two letter bombs was discovered by an employee of the Saudi-owned newspaper Al Hayat as he was opening the morning mail and noticed wires protruding from an envelope, police said. Another was found in that mail.

The second two arrived at the same 11th floor office in the afternoon mail delivery at the National Press Club building, two blocks from the White House.

All four were put in special containers and taken away in reinforced bomb trucks belonging to the police department's explosive ordnance division.

The devices were taken in a heavily escorted convoy to the parking lot of a football stadium and "disrupted" so the components could be studied for evidence, police spokesman Joe Gentile said.

"It is my understanding that they could have taken a life," he said.

The FBI revealed later that two similar letter bombs also disguised as Christmas cards were found at Leavenworth prison.

"None of the bombs exploded but would have caused grave harm if they had," the FBI said in a written statement.

All of the cards were sent through the mail from Egypt. Some were postmarked Dec. 21, 1996, from Alexandria, Egypt and contained no return address. The FBI described them as plain white envelopes with computer generated addresses.

"Anyone receiving similar cards should use extreme caution, not handle the envelopes in any way and immediately notify the local police or local FBI office," the FBI statement said.

The FBI terrorist task force and the metropolitan police closed off a two-block area, evacuated the National Press Club building which houses the Washington offices of many U.S. and foreign news organisations, and searched it with bomb sniffing dogs.

Later on Thursday, the building was reopened. Police, FBI agents and bomb technicians also searched the city's main post office, the central point for distribution in Washington, and intercepted mail addressed to the newspaper.

Law enforcement officials declined to describe the actual devices in detail, but said "the components did make up a complete circuitry system for a bomb."

Al Hayat, a Saudi newspaper based in London, had published the manifesto of a radical group after the fatal June 25 bombing of U.S. military personnel in the Saudi city of Khobar.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Woman held for allegedly killing ex-husband

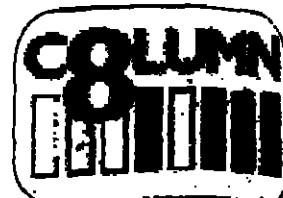
AMMAN (J.T.) — Police sources said on Friday police had arrested a 42-year-old divorced woman who allegedly stabbed her husband with a kitchen knife following an argument in Jabal Ashrafieh. The woman, who was not identified by police, stabbed her 42-year-old former husband in her apartment following an argument. They have been divorced for three years, the sources said. "The victim was visiting his wife when an argument erupted between him, and the woman grabbed a kitchen knife and stabbed him several times in the chest," the source said. The official source said that the woman remained under custody pending further investigations.

### Six Russians killed in crash in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Six Russian tourists and their Egyptian guide were killed overnight when their bus collided with a truck north of the Red Sea resort of Hurgada, Interior Ministry officials said Friday. Twenty-nine Russian tourists were aboard the bus travelling from Cairo to Hurgada when the accident occurred, they said. Five Russian tourists were injured and hospitalised. A Belgian tourist was killed meanwhile and four French tourists injured when their bus collided with a truck overnight in Hurgada, the officials said.

### Turkish Islamic deputies to visit Israel

ANKARA (AP) — Two deputies from the ruling Islamic Welfare Party will visit Israel in a sign that the party's once-fierce opposition to ties with Israel is easing. Welfare deputies Ahmet Derin and Ramazan Yenidede join five other lawmakers from other parties for a four-day visit starting Sunday to Israel and lands under Palestinian rule, their aides confirmed Friday. The visit will be a first to Israel by members of the Welfare Party. Before it came to power last year, Welfare pledged to cancel a military cooperation deal allowing Israeli jets to train in Turkish space. But once in power, Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan retreated from his promise and even approved a project for the modernisation of 54 Turkish F-4 jets by an Israeli company. The Turkish deputies are scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Levy and Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon, according to an Israeli embassy official, Ami Mehl.



### Fergie in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AP) — The Duchess of York, accompanied by her daughters Eugenie and Beatrice, arrived in Argentina on Thursday for a private visit with her mother. The former Sarah Ferguson, or 'Fergie', arrived at Ezeiza international airport, where she boarded a private plane to take her to her mother's farm in the town of Saliquello, 500 kilometres southwest of Buenos Aires. British embassy officials in Buenos Aires said they were unable to comment on the duchess's stay as it was a private visit. The local news agency Noticias Argentinas said the duchess planned to stay in Argentina for two weeks. Her mother, Susan Barrantes, moved to Argentina in the 1970s and married polo player Hector Barrantes.

### Mandela jail turns tourist attraction

CAPE TOWN (AP) — President Nelson Mandela's former prison cell is now a tourist attraction. The first tourists travelled Wednesday to South Africa's notorious Robben Island prison, the main attraction of the newly declared Robben Island National Monument. The island prison, now managed by the Ministry of Art and Culture, closed in December and the last remaining prisoners were transferred to mainland cells. Robben Island had been used for as a place to banish political prisoners and others such as lepers and the incurably mentally ill. Tours now take in the notorious section B of the prison, where Mandela was held. The president spent 18 of his 27 years in prison on the island. Tourists also visit the remnants of the leper colony, a Muslim shrine, the village where the prison guards lived and other sites. Under the government-sponsored tourist initiative, three ferries leaving from the Cape Town waterfront will take about 300 visitors a day to the island.

### 'Pocket Hercules' quits

ANKARA (AP) — The weight of years and the demands of training were ultimately too much for Turkey's "Pocket Hercules" to bear. The compact weightlifter — who captured three Olympic gold medals and the hearts of his adopted homeland — announced Thursday he is retiring. "I am now 30. It is enough. I am announcing that I am putting an end to my active sports life," Milliyet newspaper quoted Naim Suleymanoglu, who became a national hero after winning his first Olympic gold in 1988 in Seoul, South Korea. He also has won seven world championships — two before he defected from his native Bulgaria in 1986. In the last Olympic Games, the 149.8-centimetre Suleymanoglu broke his own world record with a combined lift of 738 1/2 pounds in snatch and clean-and-jerk. "Weightlifting has given me a lot, and it has given me a lot of joy," said Suleymanoglu, dubbed the "Pocket Hercules" because of his strength and size.

### Inventor of Margarita cocktail dies

EL PASO, Texas (R) — The man widely credited with inventing the Margarita, a smooth Tequila-based cocktail renowned for its potent kick, was buried on Thursday after dying of a stroke. He was 78. Family members said Francisco "Pancho" Morales died on Monday in the southwest Texas border city of El Paso and was buried on Thursday morning.